



RAM SHASTRI

CRUSADER FOR JUSTICE AND TRUTH

Vol 698





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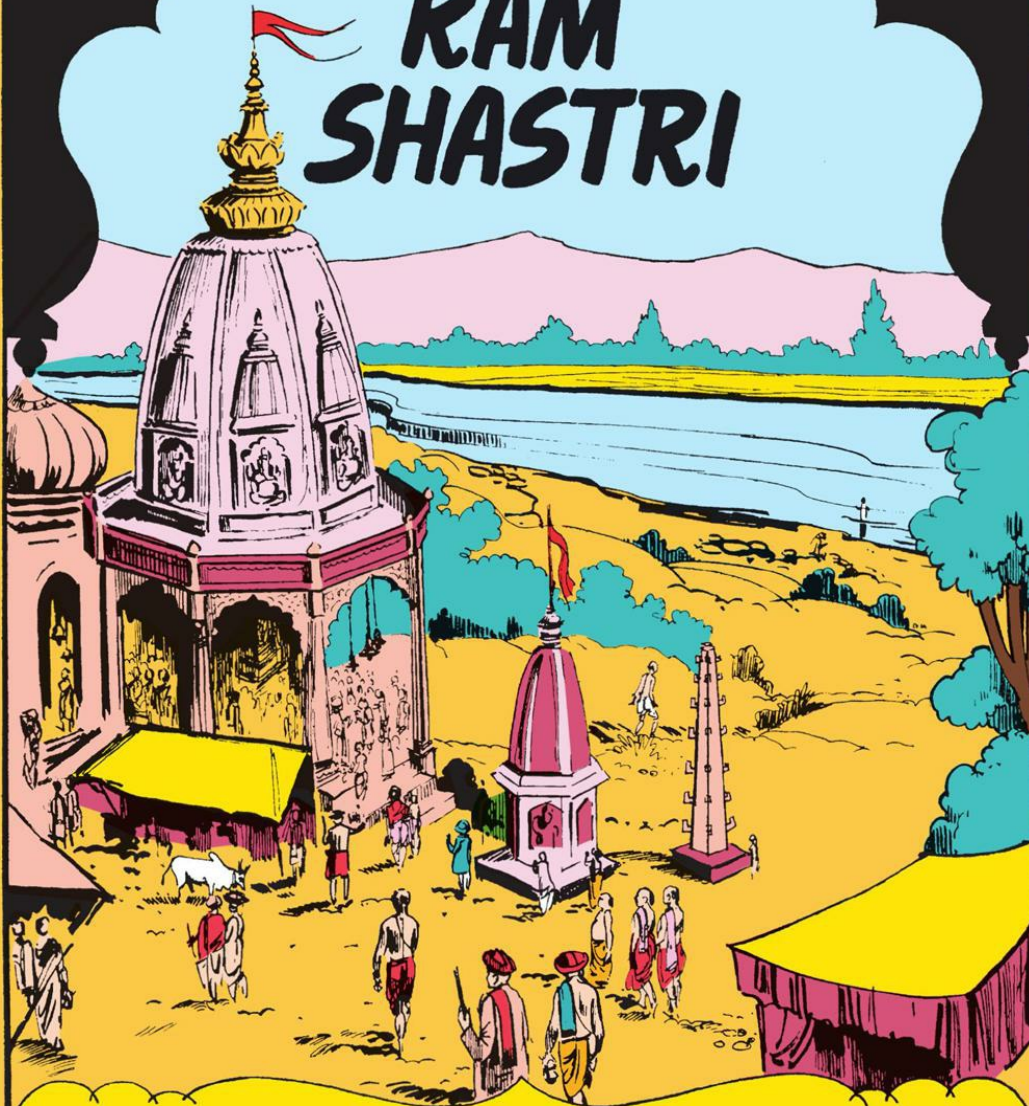
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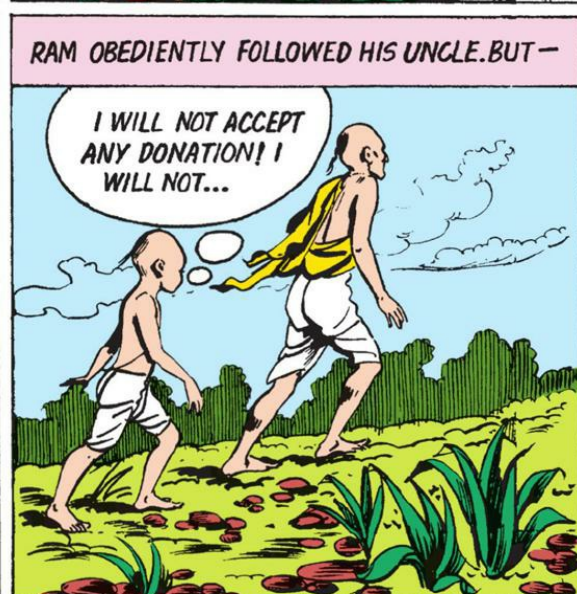
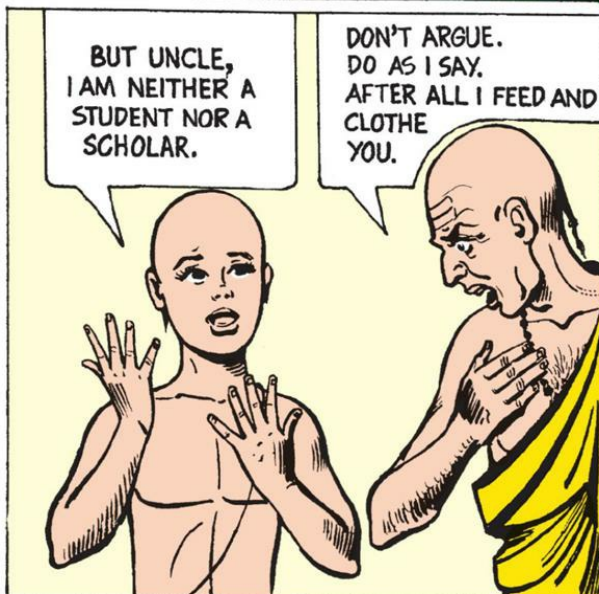
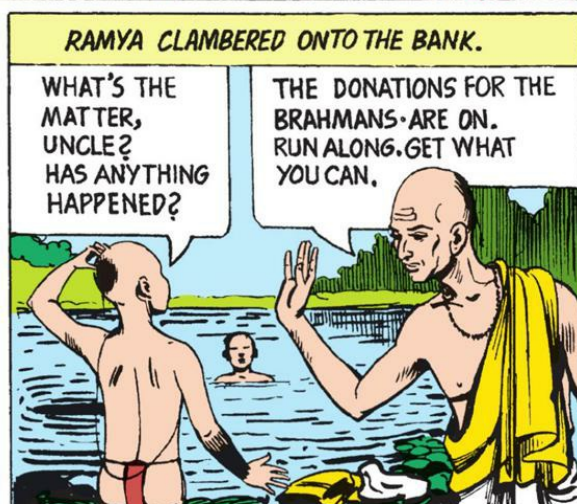
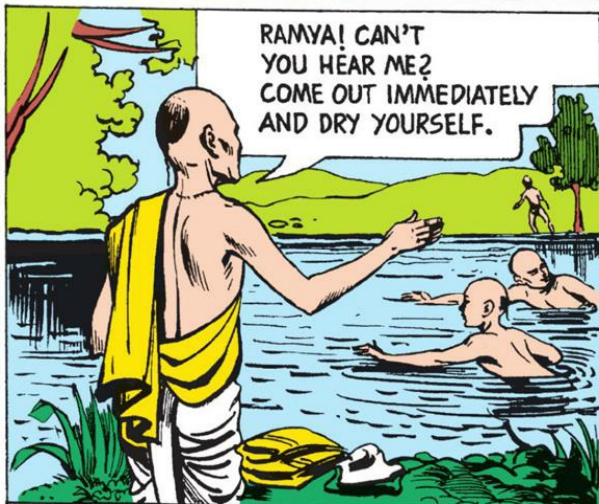
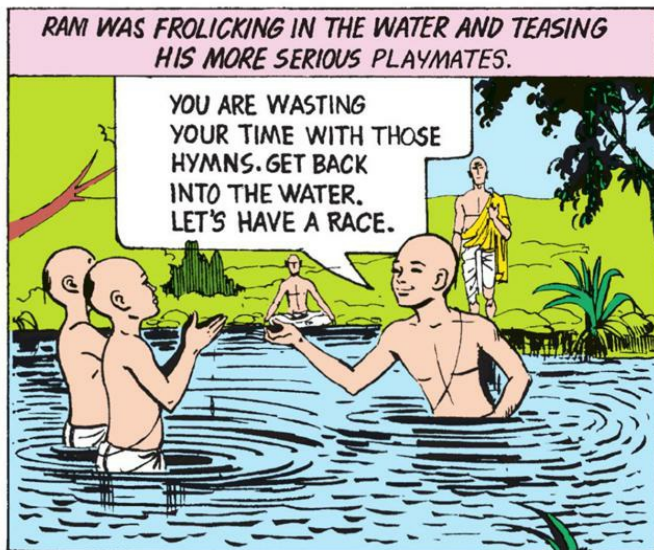
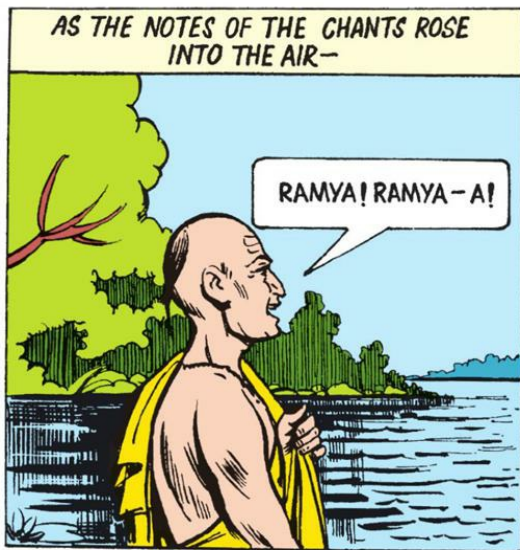
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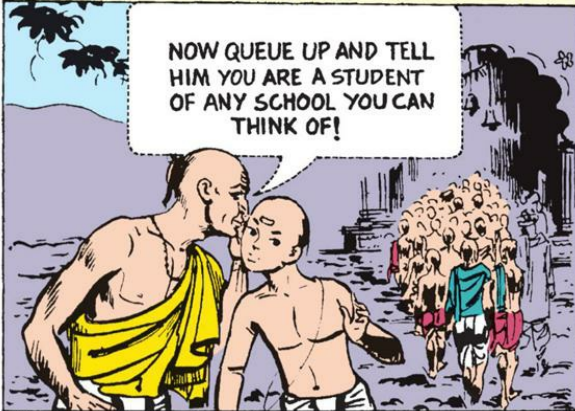
RAM SHASTRI



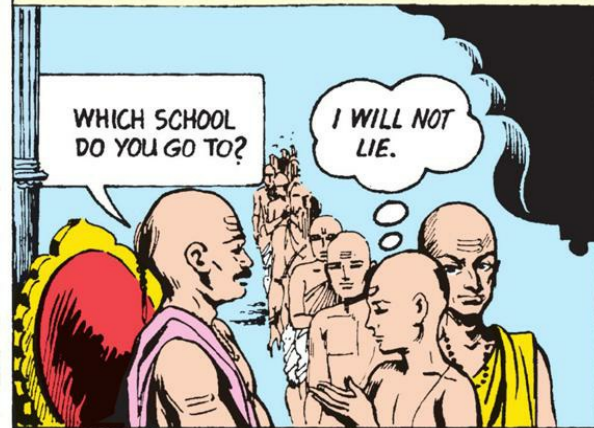
THE ANNUAL TEMPLE FESTIVAL WAS IN FULL SWING AT MAHULI KSHETRA
IN SATARA DISTRICT, WHERE RAM SHASTRI SPENT HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD.
AFTER THE PUJA, DONATIONS WOULD BE GIVEN TO ALL QUALIFIED BRAHMAN
STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS PRESENT.



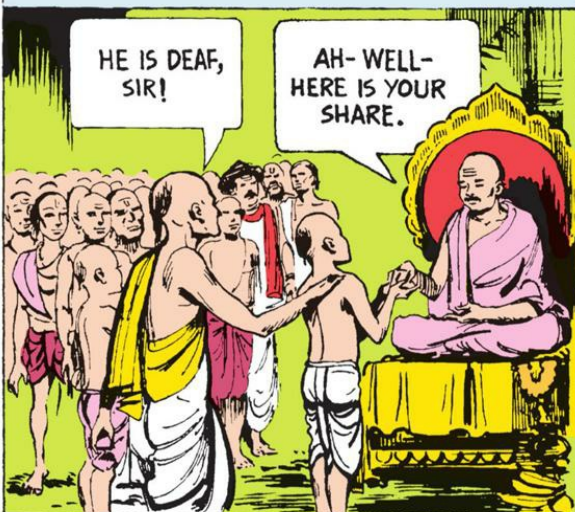
EACH BRAHMAN HAD TO DECLARE HIS CREDENTIALS AND ONLY THEN COLLECT HIS GIFTS.



WHEN IT WAS RAM'S TURN—



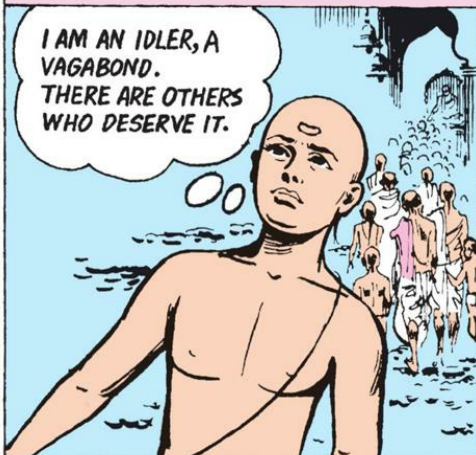
RAM HUNG HIS HEAD IN SHAME, REFUSING TO LIE.



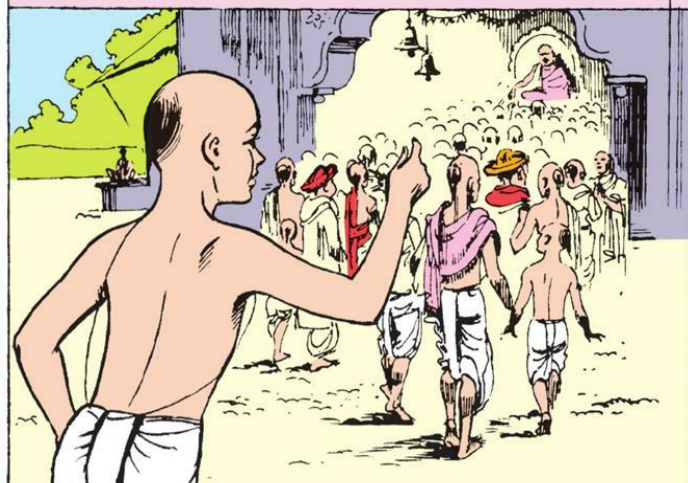
RAM TOOK THE MONEY MECHANICALLY AND WALKED AWAY, UTTERLY MISERABLE.

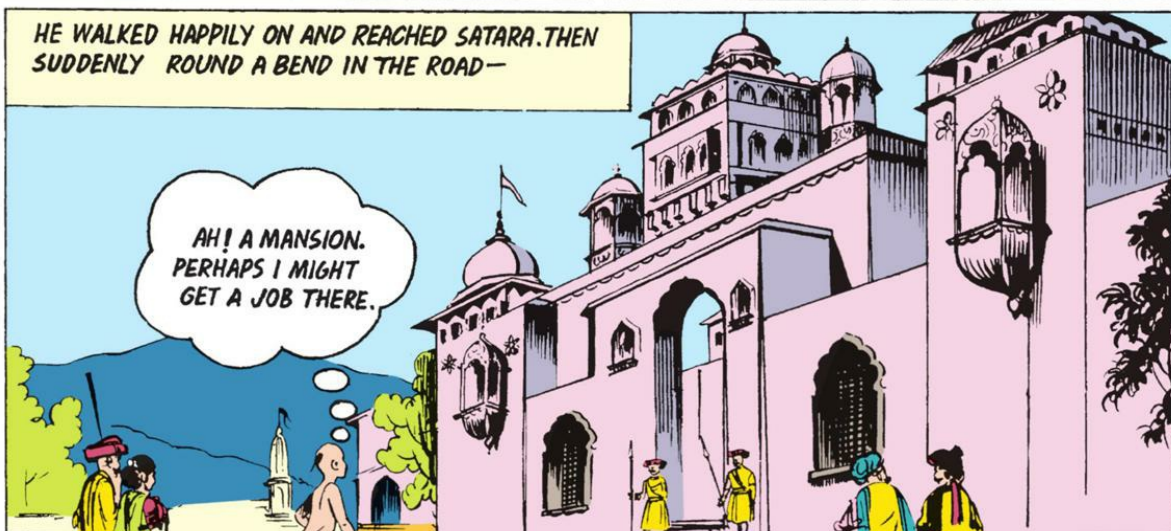
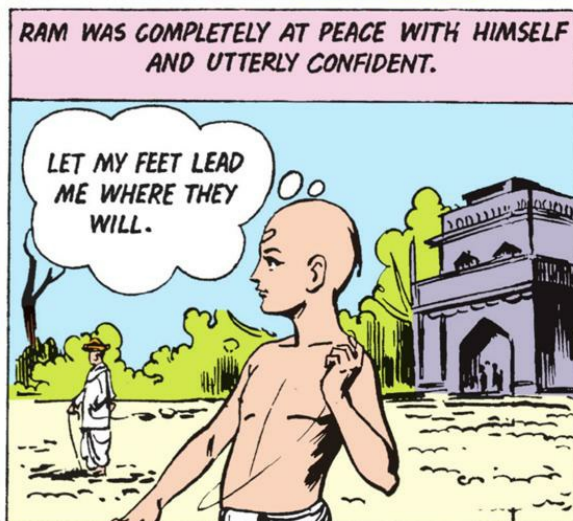
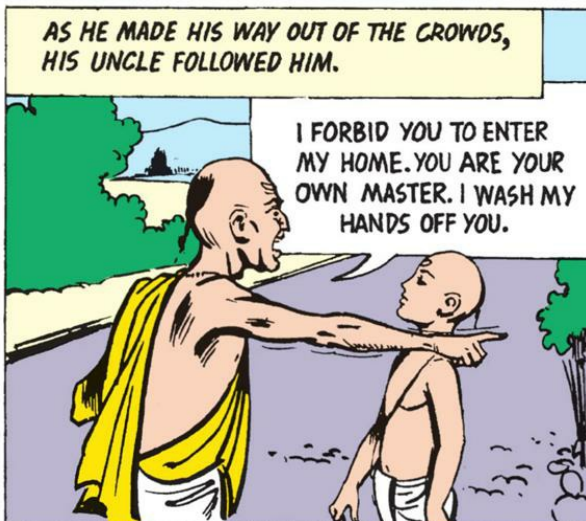
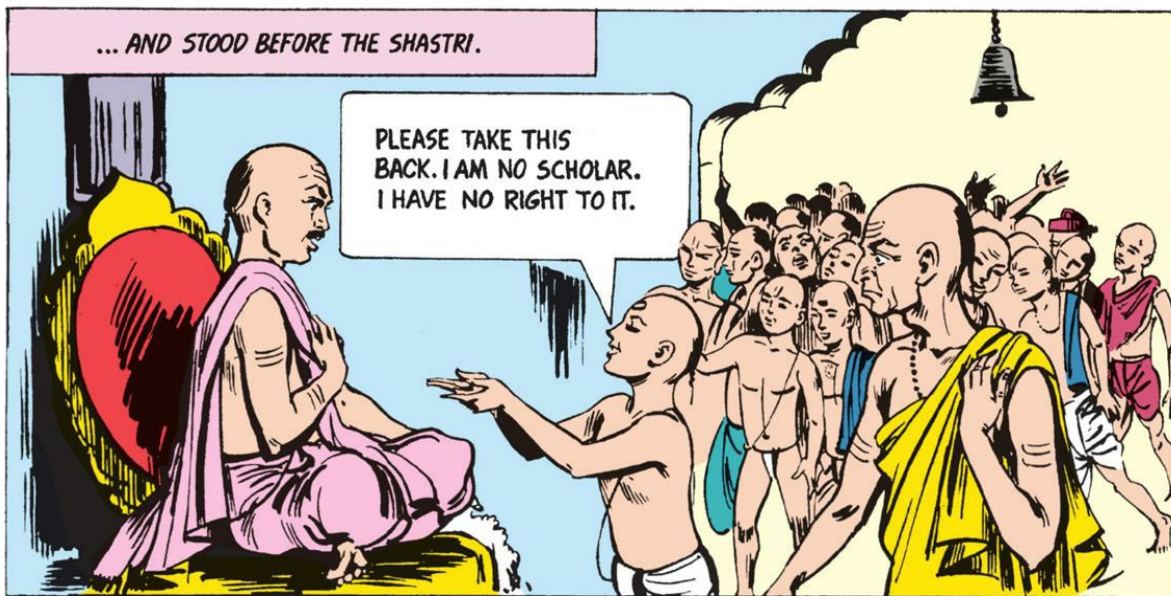


HE HAD NOT COVERED MUCH DISTANCE. THE GUILT OF FALSEHOOD WEIGHED UPON HIM.

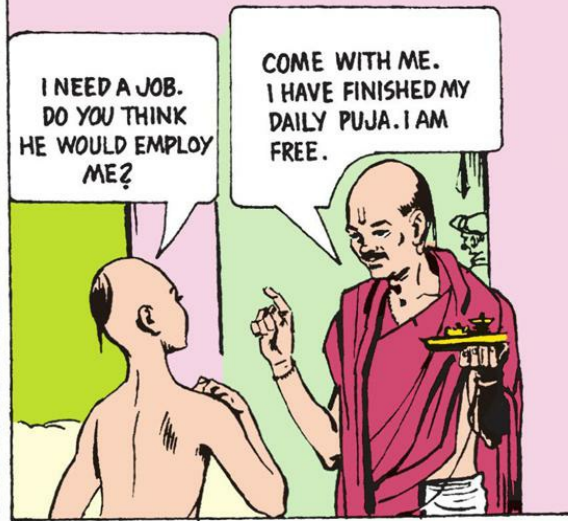
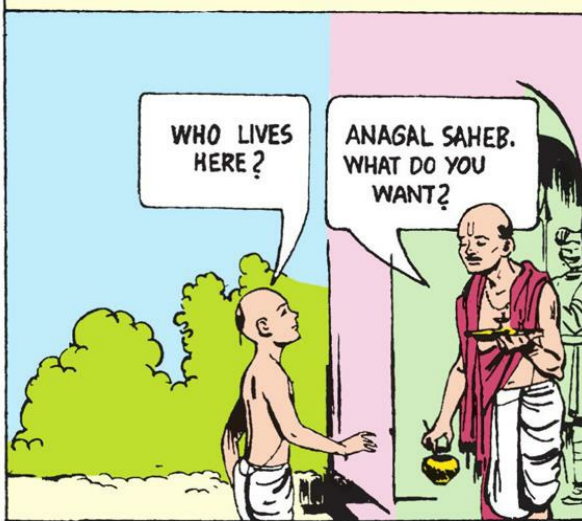


TURNING ON HIS TRACKS, HE PUSHED HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWDS...

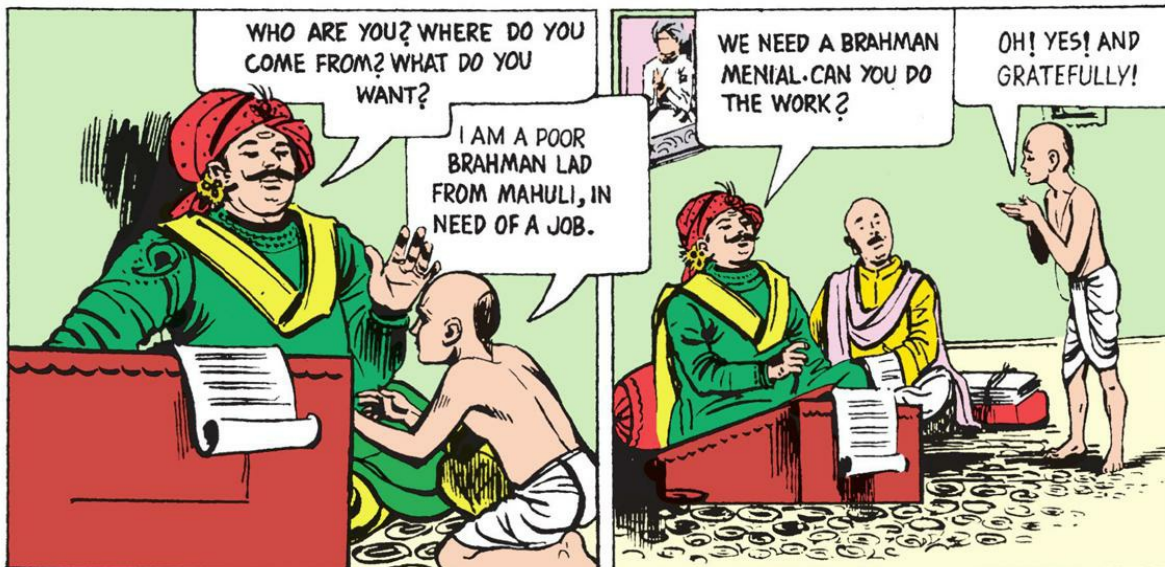
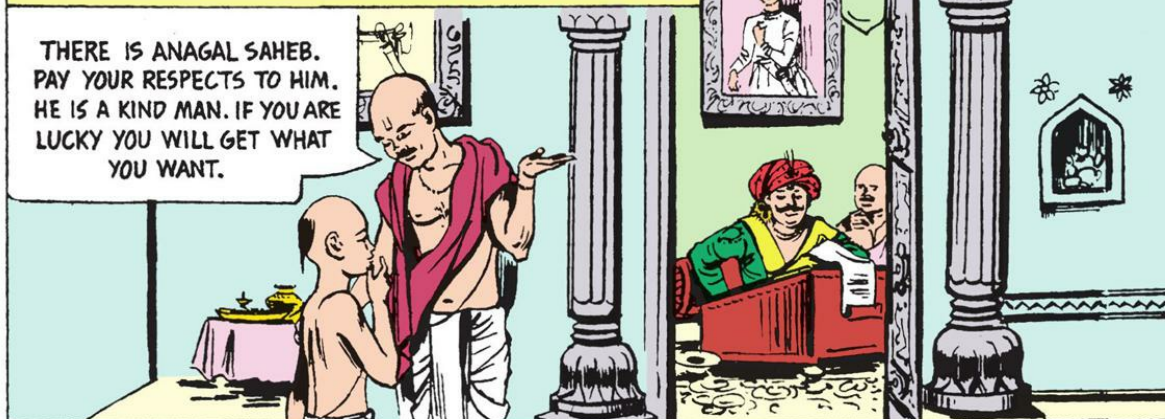


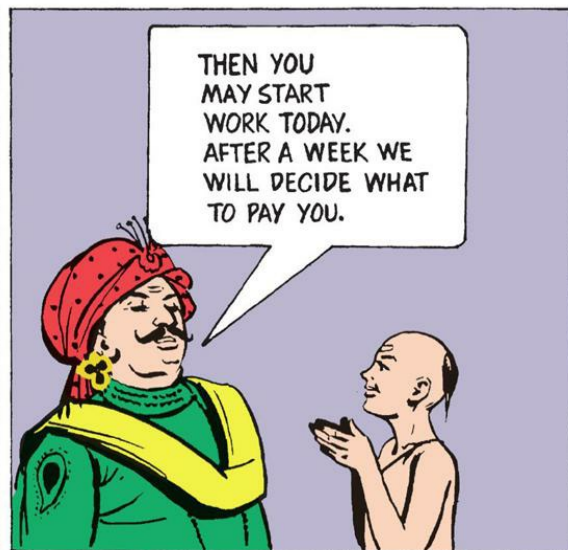


AT THAT MOMENT A PUJARI CAME OUT.



AND THE PUJARI LED RAM TO ANAGAL SAHEB.

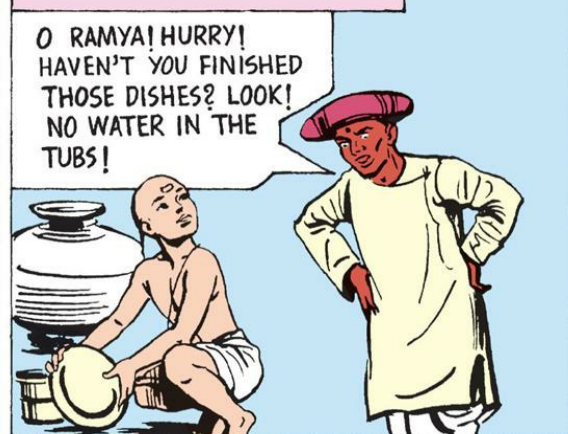




ANAGAL CALLED FOR THE CHIEF MENIAL.



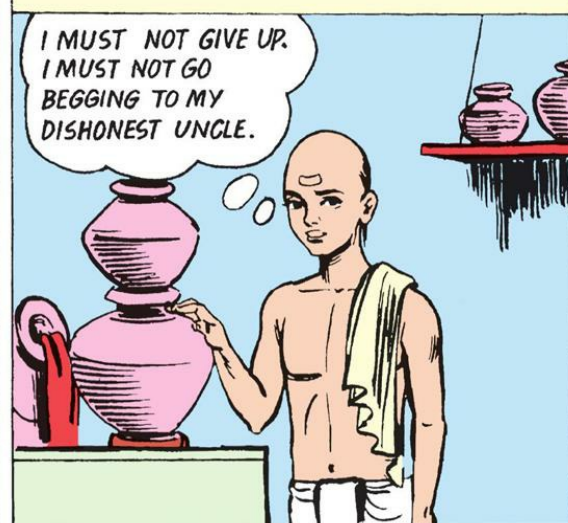
AND RAM'S ORDEALS BEGAN.



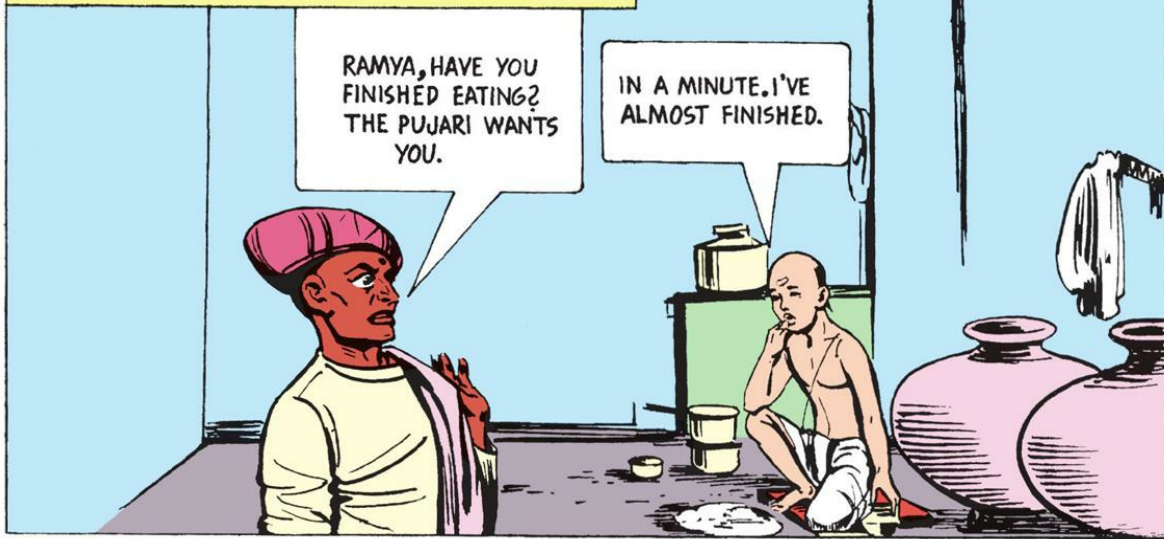
HE WAS OFTEN HUMILIATED.



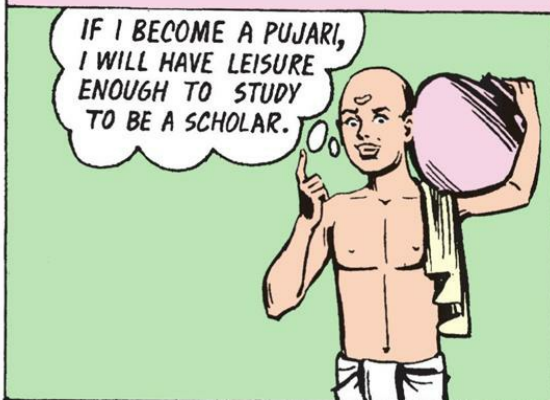
RAM OFTEN FELT LIKE GIVING UP HIS JOB. BUT...



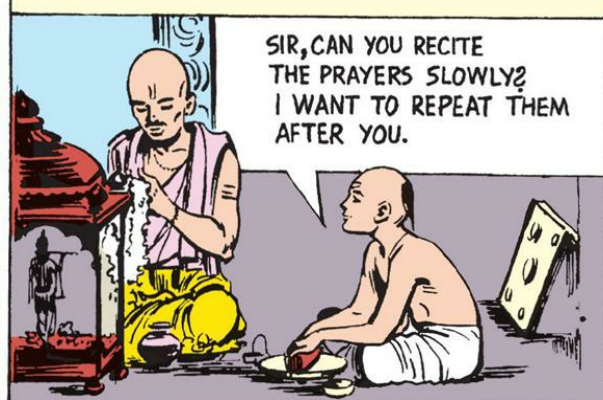
AS THE DAYS PASSED, RAM GOT USED TO HIS WORK.



ONE DAY A THOUGHT SUDDENLY STRUCK HIM—

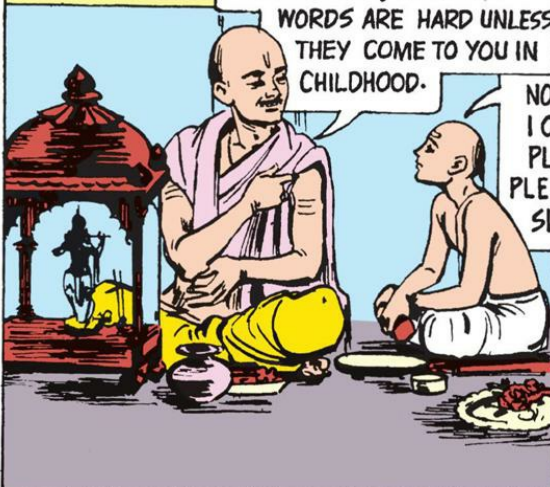


THAT DAY AS HE WAS ASSISTING THE PUJARI—

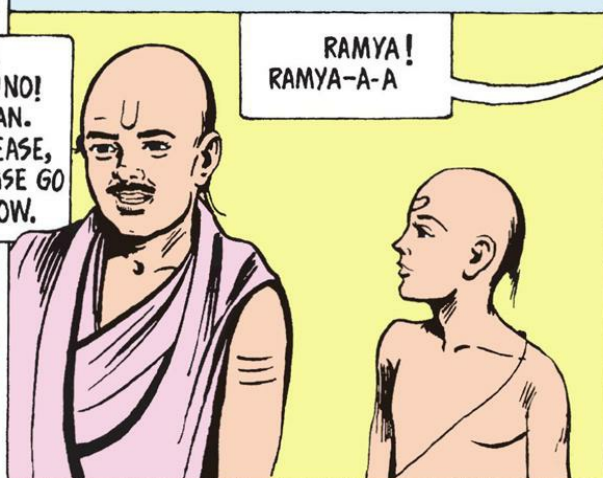


THE PUJARI WAS AMUSED.

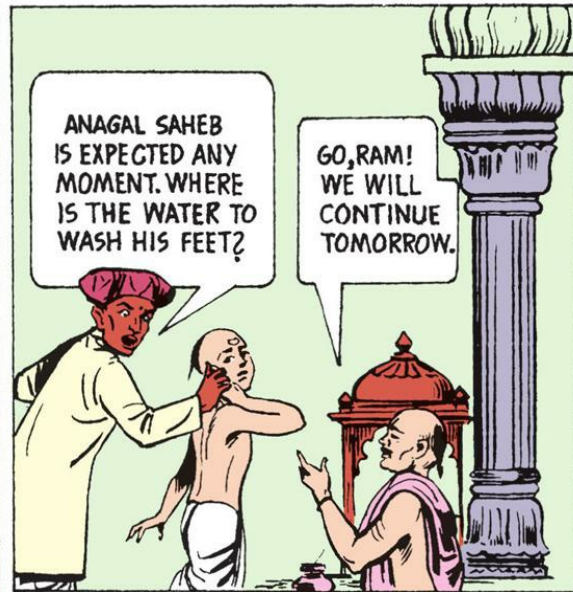
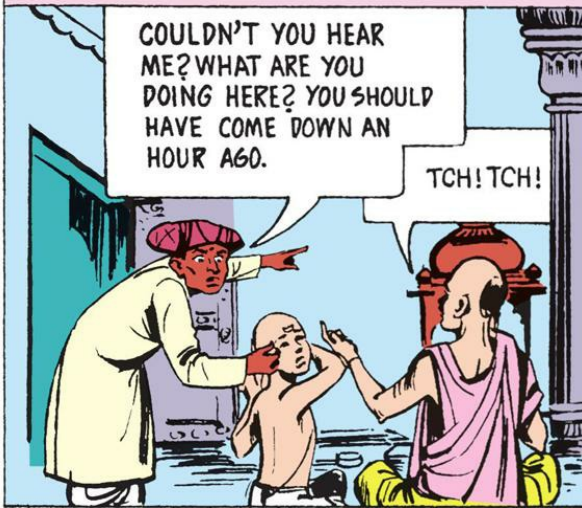
RAM, HOW CAN YOU MOUTH THESE NOW? SANSKRIT WORDS ARE HARD UNLESS THEY COME TO YOU IN CHILDHOOD.



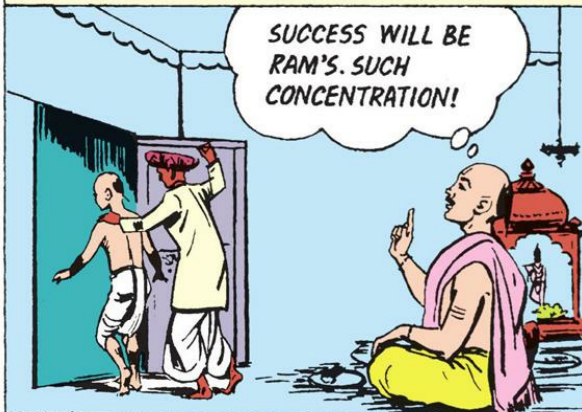
THE PUJARI SMILED AND BEGAN RECITING THE PRAYERS AT A SLOWER PACE. JUST THEN—



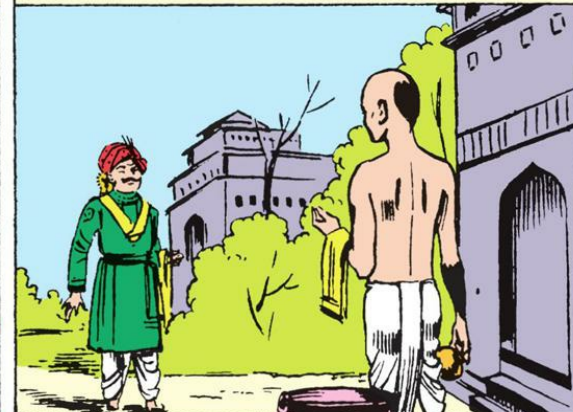
THE NEXT MOMENT THE CHIEF MENIAL CHARGED INTO THE ROOM.



AND PUSHING RAM IN FRONT OF HIM, THE CHIEF MENIAL LEFT THE ROOM.



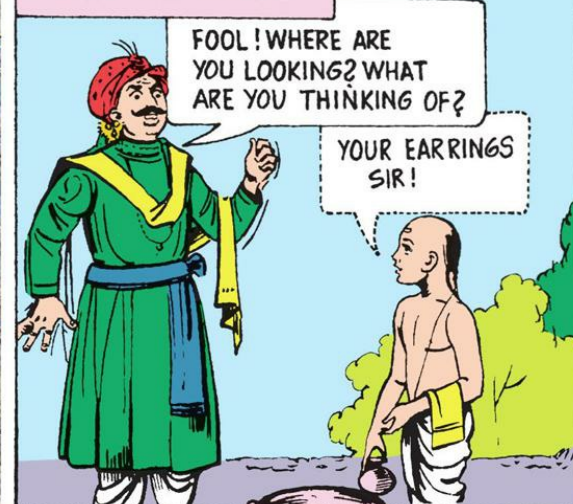
RAM WAS READY WITH THE WATER WHEN ANAGAL ARRIVED.



ANAGAL PLACED HIS FEET ON THE PLATFORM.



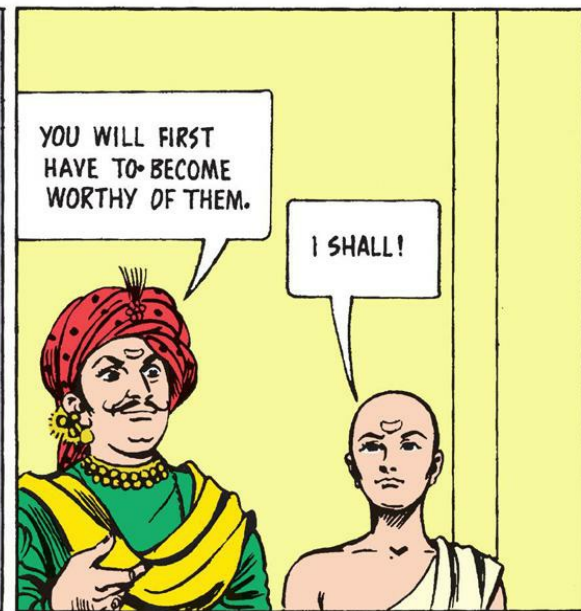
ANAGAL WAS FURIOUS.





WHY! DO YOU FEEL
LIKE WEARING
SUCH EARRINGS?

YES! SIR!

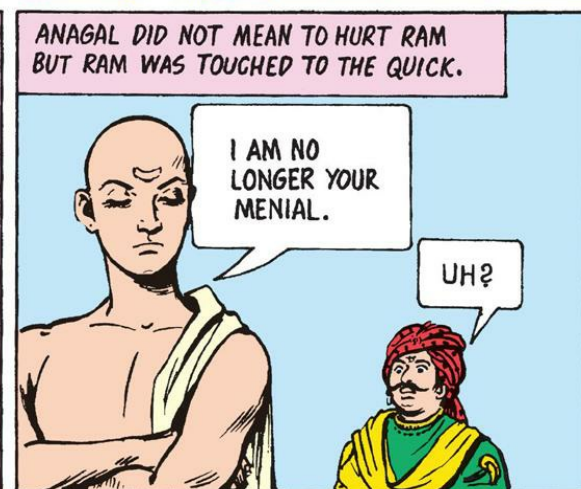


YOU WILL FIRST
HAVE TO BECOME
WORTHY OF THEM.

I SHALL!



HA! HA! HA!
AS MY MENIAL?



ANAGAL DID NOT MEAN TO HURT RAM
BUT RAM WAS TOUCHED TO THE QUICK.

I AM NO
LONGER YOUR
MENIAL.

UH?



RAM'S REPLY HAD AN UNEXPECTED EFFECT ON ANAGAL. HIS
VOICE BECAME GENTLE AND KIND.

THEN WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
DO?

I WILL GO TO VARANASI,
FIND A MASTER, LEARN AT HIS
FEET AND BECOME A
SHASTRI. TILL THEN I WILL NOT
SET FOOT ON THIS LAND.

BEFORE ANAGAL COULD REPLY THE PUJARI CAME ON THE SCENE.

I AM CONFIDENT HE WILL.

AND THE PUJARI TOLD ANAGAL ABOUT RAM'S ATTEMPTS TO LEARN SHLOKAS AND HIS ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE.

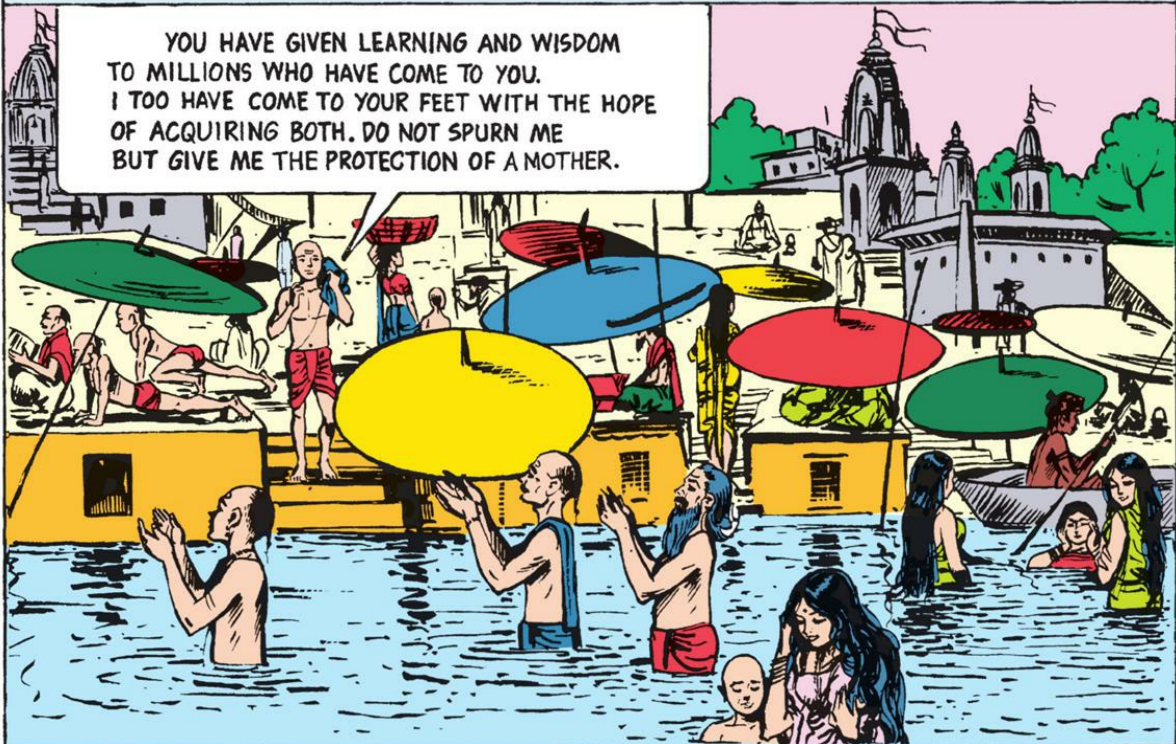
ANAGAL REACHED INTO HIS CUMMERBUND AND PULLED OUT A BAG OF COINS.

THIS BOY IS NO ORDINARY MENIAL!

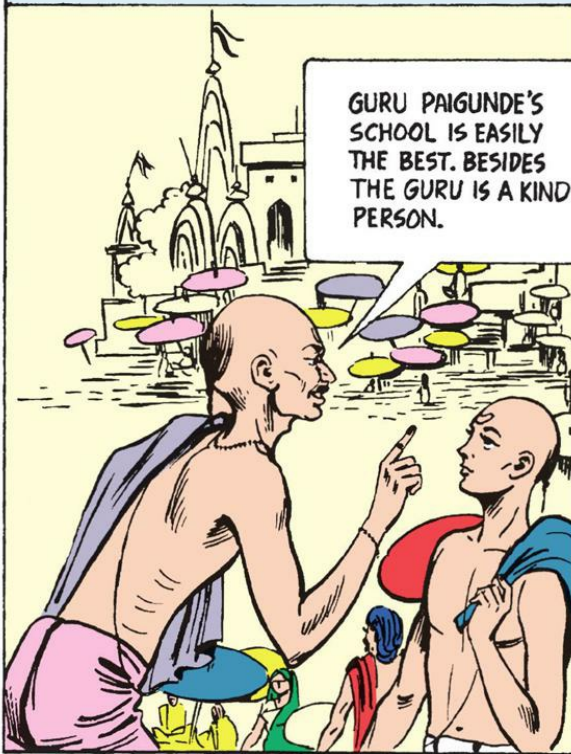
HERE I TAKE THIS WITH MY BLESSINGS. MAY YOU SUCCEED IN YOUR AMBITION.

THE TREK TO VARANASI WAS A LONG AND ARDUOUS ONE FOR THE SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD RAM BUT HE FINALLY REACHED.

YOU HAVE GIVEN LEARNING AND WISDOM TO MILLIONS WHO HAVE COME TO YOU. I TOO HAVE COME TO YOUR FEET WITH THE HOPE OF ACQUIRING BOTH. DO NOT SPURN ME BUT GIVE ME THE PROTECTION OF A MOTHER.



HE WENT AROUND MAKING ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE BEST SCHOOLS.



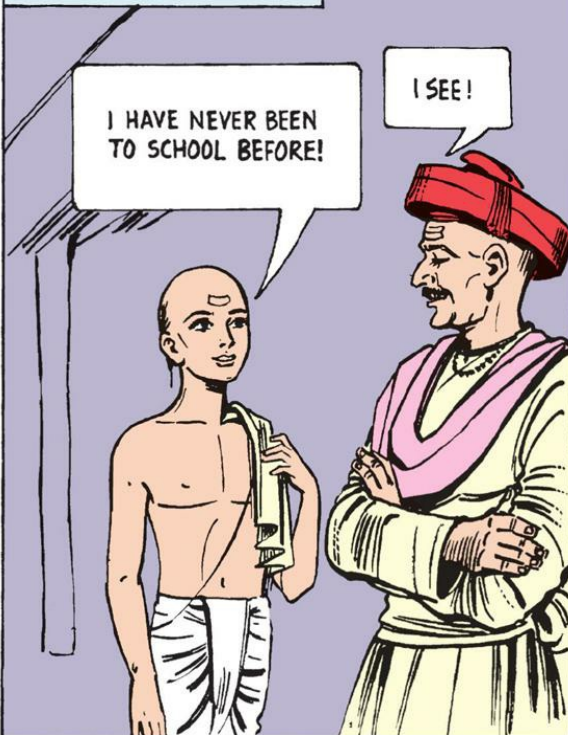
RAM WENT TO THE GURU.

SIR, I HAVE COME ALL THE WAY FROM MAHULI IN THE SOUTH. I WANT TO LEARN. PLEASE ACCEPT ME AS YOUR PUPIL.

WHERE DID YOU STUDY EARLIER? HOW FAR HAVE YOU STUDIED?



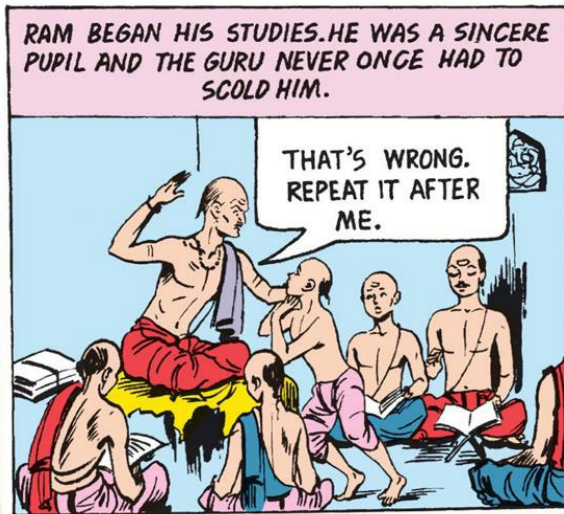
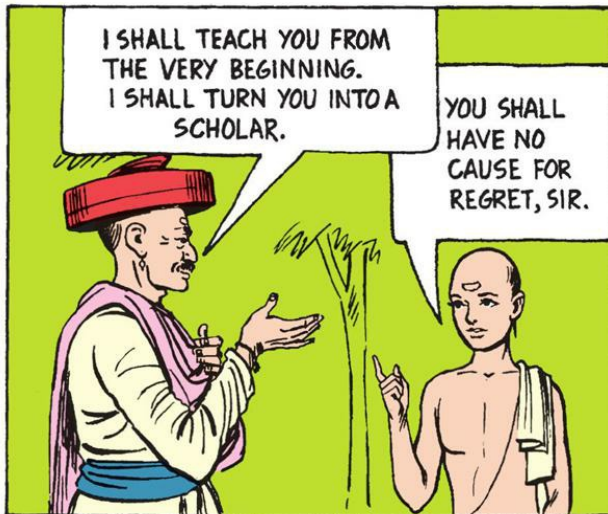
RAM WAS ASHAMED.



THE GURU UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION IMMEDIATELY.

NEVER MIND. YOU HAVE THE WILL TO LEARN. THAT IS IMPORTANT. YOU SHALL BE MY PUPIL.





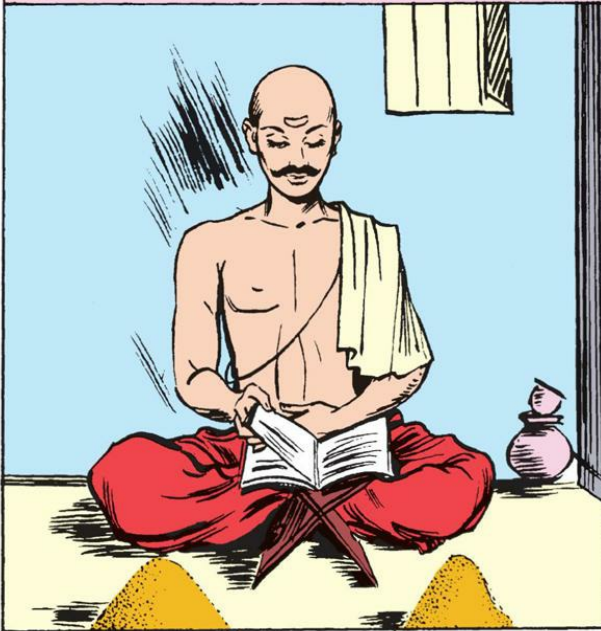
HIS FELLOW STUDENTS OFTEN TEASED HIM BECAUSE HE WAS MUCH OLDER THAN MOST OF THEM.



BUT RAM TOOK THE TEASING GOOD-HUMOUREDLY AND SOON BECAME A FAVOURITE. ONE DAY—



TWELVE YEARS PASSED IN THIS MANNER
AND RAM EMERGED A MASTER IN THE VEDAS,
VEDANGAS AND SHASTRAS.



THEN ONE DAY—

RAM, TOMORROW
YOU SHALL BE
ORDAINED A SHASTRI,
AND WILL BE FREE TO
LEAVE THE SCHOOL.



THE NEXT DAY—

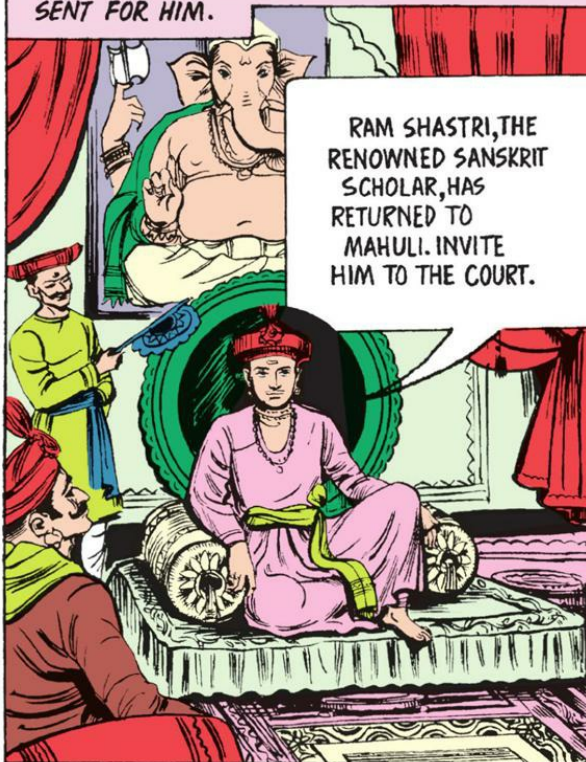
SIR, YOU MADE
ME WHAT I AM
TODAY. WHAT
DAKSHINA CAN I
OFFER YOU?

DON'T SELL YOUR KNOWLEDGE.
THAT IS THE GREATEST DAKSHINA
YOU COULD OFFER ME. LET JUSTICE,
THE KING AND SOCIETY BENEFIT
BY YOUR LEARNING.



AFTER THE CEREMONY WAS OVER RAM SHASTRI LEFT FOR
MAHULI KSHETRA DETERMINED TO REPAY HIS GURU TO THE LAST.

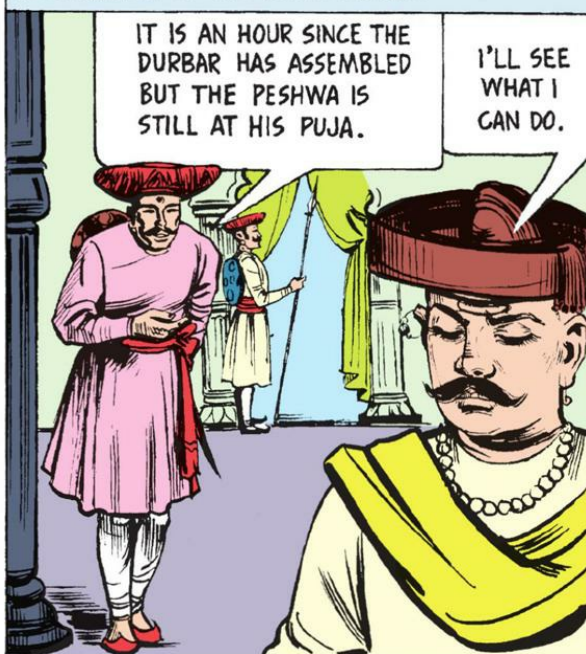
AS SOON AS RAM SHASTRI ARRIVED AT MAHULI KSHETRA, PESHWA MADHAV RAO SENT FOR HIM.



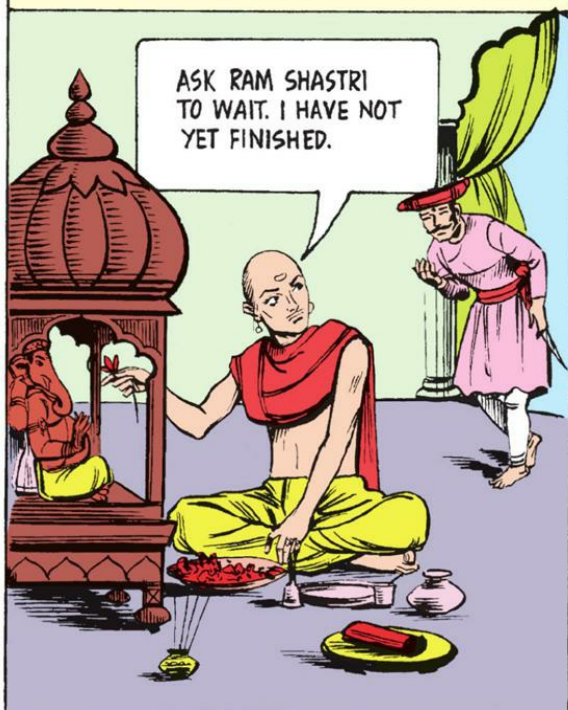
WHEN RAM SHASTRI CAME TO THE COURT AT POONA—



MADHAV RAO WAS A GOOD RULER. BUT A BRAHMAN BY BIRTH, HE SPENT FAR TOO MUCH TIME ON RELIGIOUS RITUALS, OFTEN IN PREFERENCE TO HIS STATE DUTIES.



RAM SHASTRI SENT A MESSAGE TO THE PESHWA. BUT—



WHEN THE MESSENGER RETURNED
UNSUCCESSFUL —



THEN HE HAD AN IDEA. AS SOON AS THE PESHWA
EMERGED FROM THE PUJA ROOM —

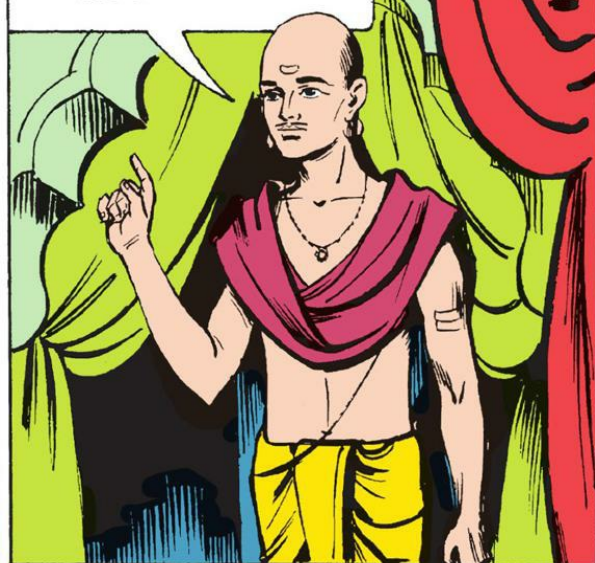


MY DUTIES AS A
BRAHMAN GO ILL
WITH MY DUTIES
AS A JUDGE. SO I HAVE
DECIDED TO GIVE UP ONE
OF THEM.



THE PESHWA IMMEDIATELY UNDERSTOOD.

YOU ARE A WISE MAN,
INDEED. MATTERS OF
STATE SHOULD COME FIRST.
LET US GO AND MEET
THE COURT.



MADHAV RAO'S CONFIDENCE IN RAM SHASTRI STEADILY GREW. WHEN THE CHIEF JUSTICE DIED, RAM SHASTRI WAS GIVEN THE APPOINTMENT.



A FEW MONTHS LATER—

IT IS THE HARVEST SEASON. I SHALL VISIT MAHULI FOR A FEW DAYS.

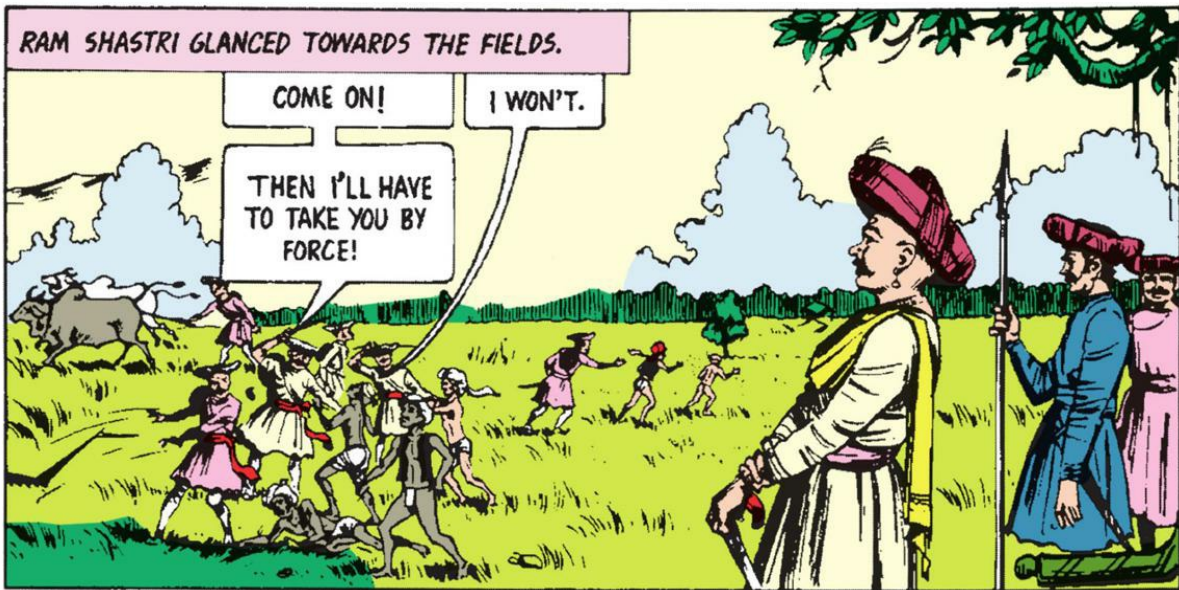


AS HIS PALANQUIN NEARED MAHULI KSHETRA—



RAM SHASTRI STEPPED OUT OF HIS PALANQUIN.



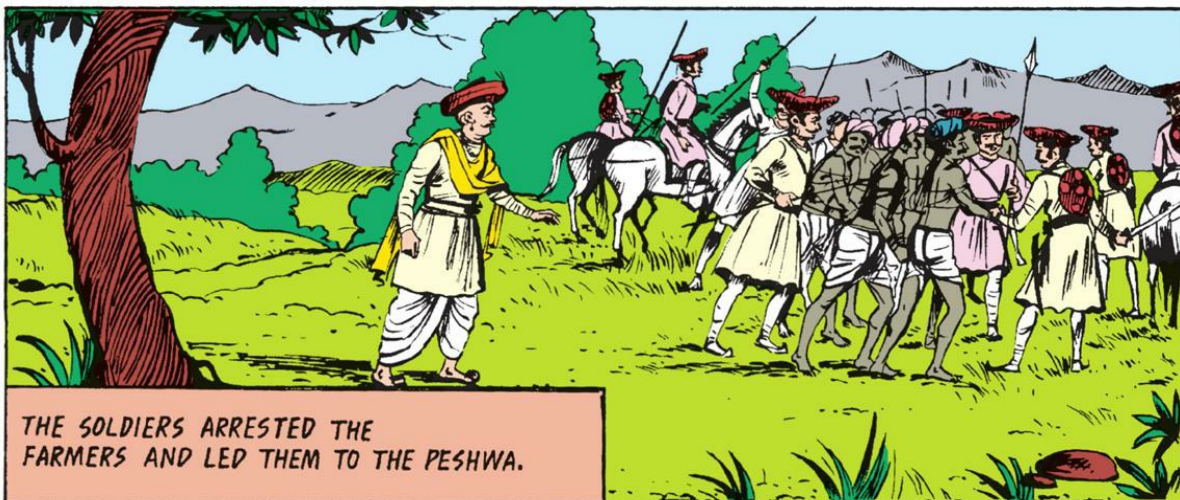


THE FARMERS, CONFIDENT OF RAM SHASTRI'S PROTECTION, REFUSED TO MOVE.

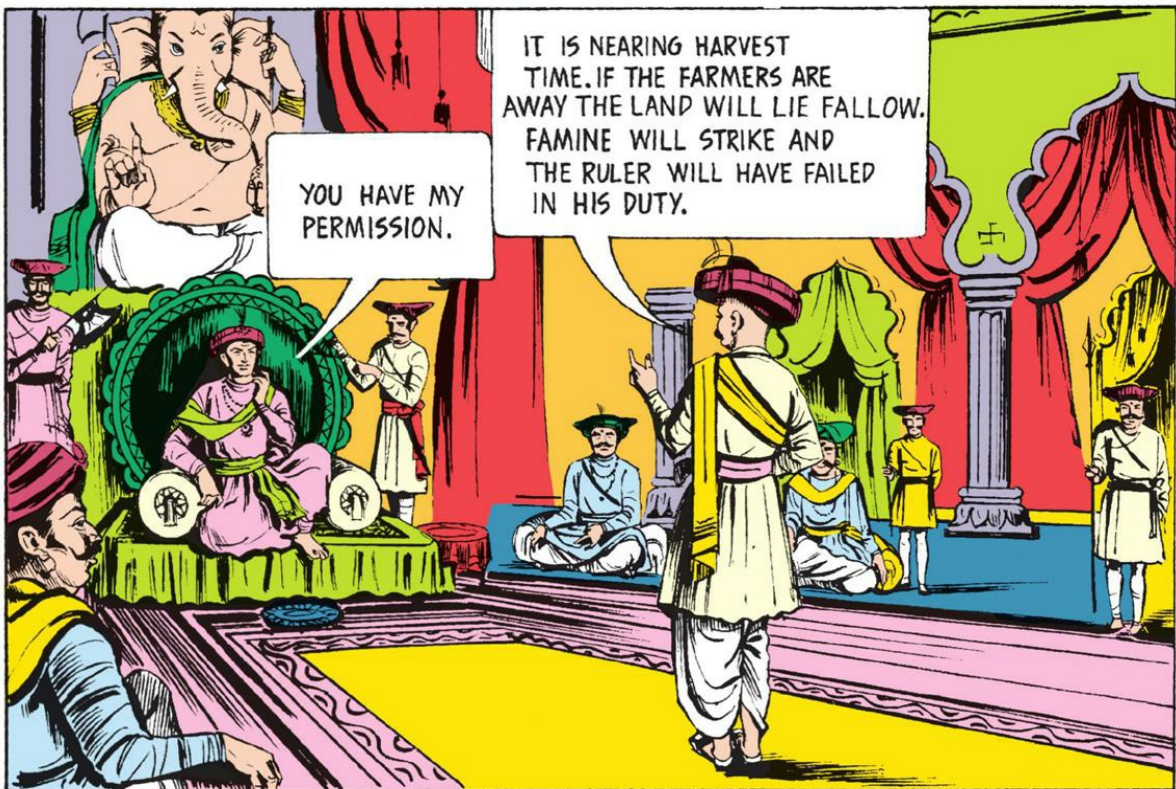
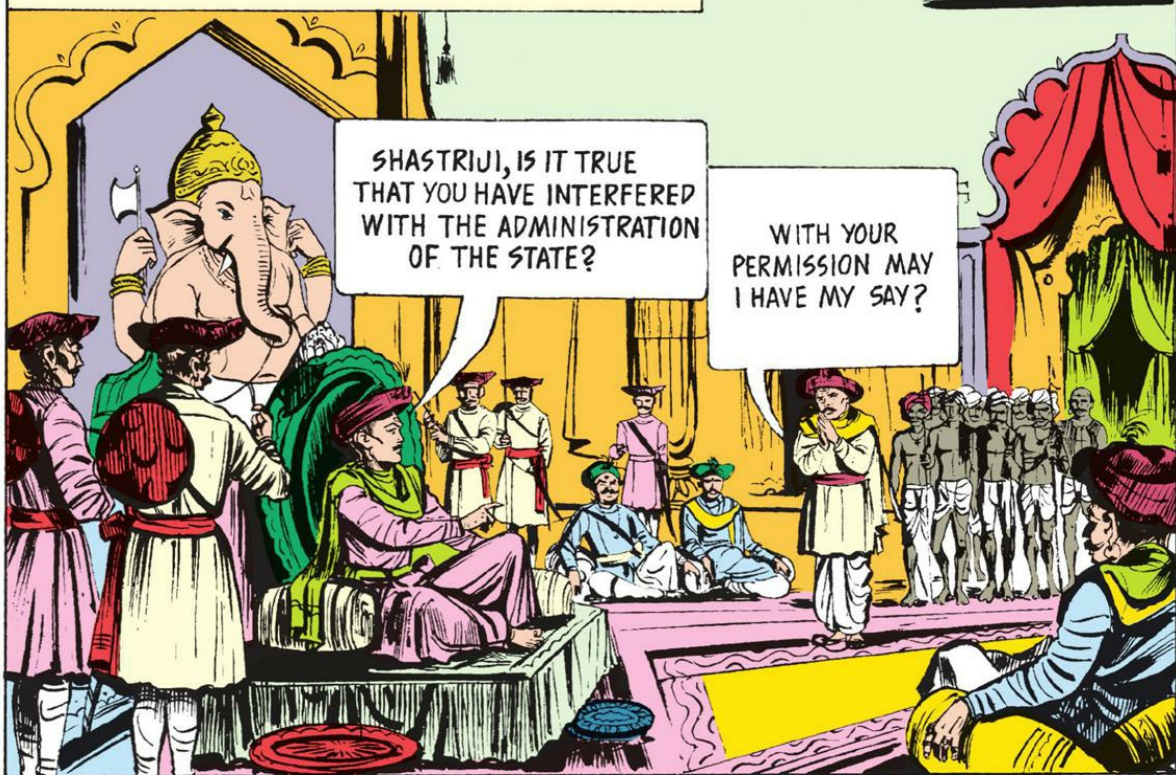


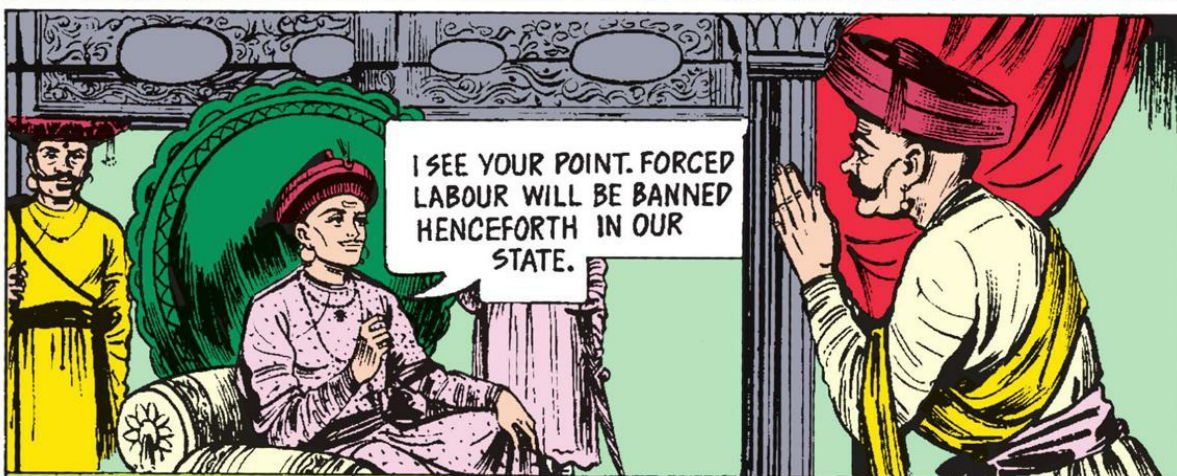
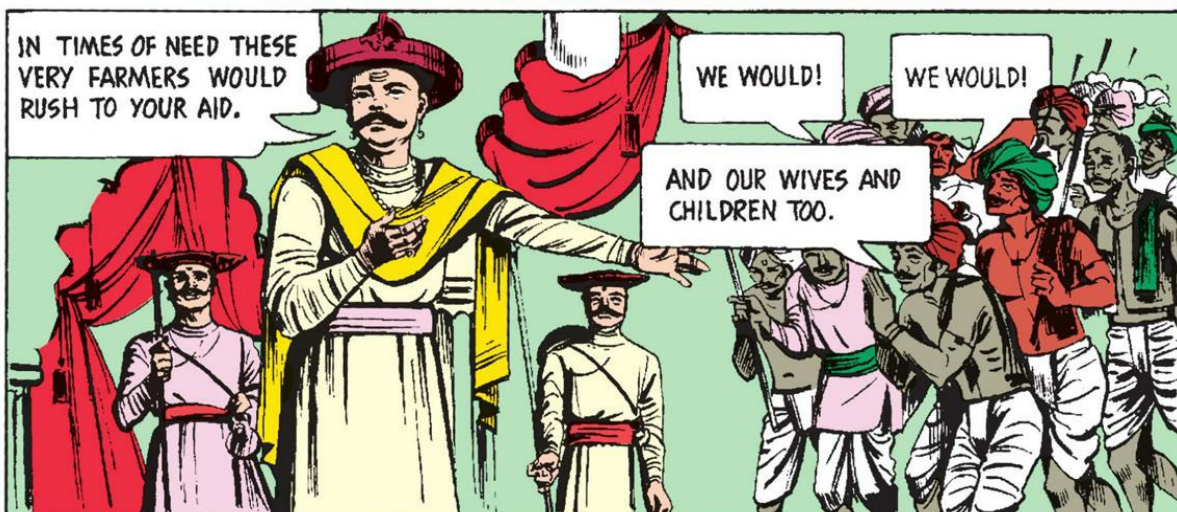
WE ARE CARRYING OUT THE ORDERS OF OUR SUBEDAR. IF THEY DON'T COME WE'LL HAVE TO ARREST THEM.

BY ALL MEANS, DO! I SHALL PLEAD THE FARMERS' CASE WITH THE PESHWA.



THE PESHWA WAS SURPRISED WHEN HE HEARD THE CHARGES AGAINST RAM SHASTRI.





THE PESHWA PARDONED THE FARMERS AND SENT THEM BACK TO THEIR FIELDS. RAM SHASTRI'S NAME BECAME A BYWORD FOR JUSTICE AND HIS FAME SPREAD OVER THE ENTIRE MARATHA KINGDOM.

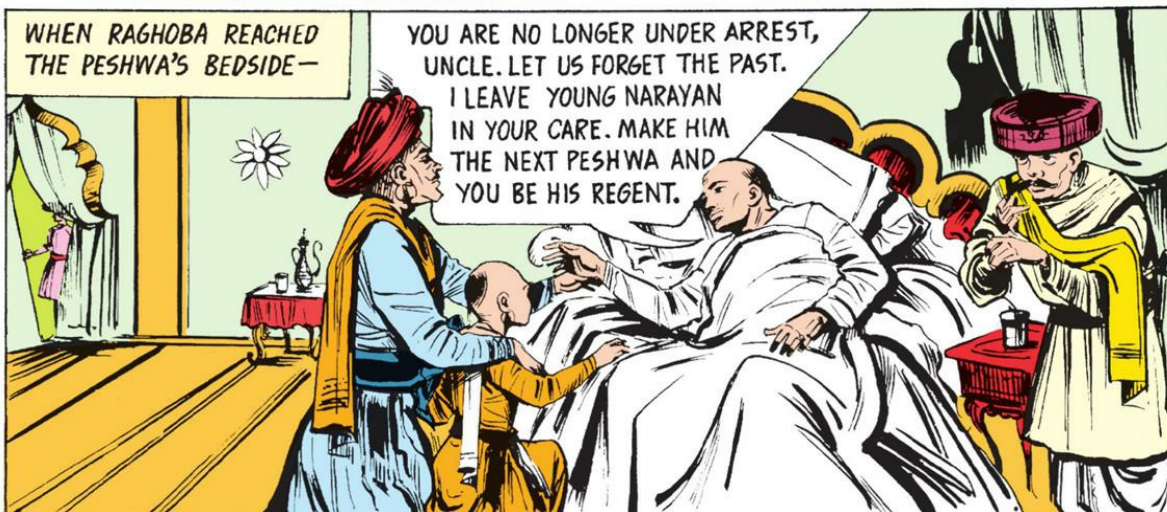
ONE DAY MADHAV RAO'S DECLINING HEALTH TOOK A TURN FOR THE WORSE. HIS BROTHER NARAYAN RAO AND RAM SHASTRI WERE AT HIS BEDSIDE.



RAGHOBHA, ALSO KNOWN AS RAGHUNATH RAO, WAS THE PESHWA'S UNCLE. MADHAV RAO HAD TO PLACE HIM UNDER HOUSE ARREST BECAUSE HE AND HIS AMBITIOUS WIFE ANANDI WERE FOREVER PLOTTING AGAINST HIM.



WHEN RAGHOBHA REACHED THE PESHWA'S BEDSIDE—



RAGHOBA WAS DELIGHTED. HE CAME BACK TO ANANDI, JUBILANT.



I HAVE GOOD NEWS! WE ARE FREE. MADHAV RAO IS ABOUT TO DIE. NARAYAN WILL BECOME THE TITULAR PESHWA AND ALL THE POWER— IN MY HANDS!

THE THRONE MAKES A PESHWA, NOT POWER. NOW YOU DO THE DIRTY WORK SO THAT NARAYAN CAN ENJOY THE THRONE.



OH! DON'T WORRY. I HAVE MY OWN PLANS.

A FEW DAYS LATER RAGHOBA CALLED ANANDIBAI TO HIM.



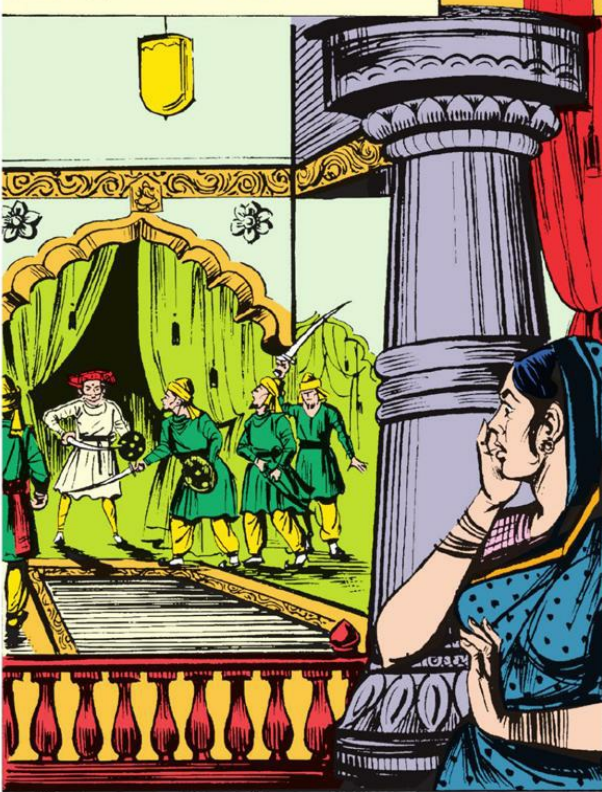
HERE! READ THIS AND YOU'LL UNDERSTAND ALL.



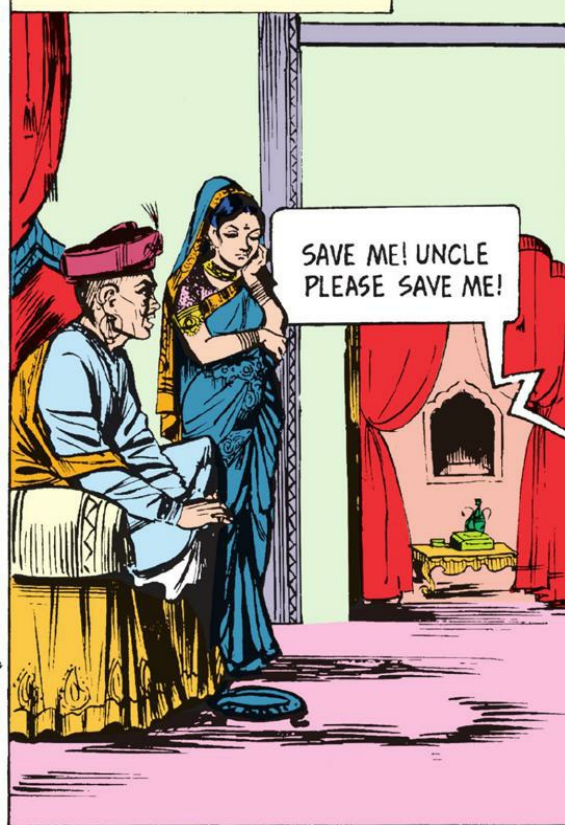
RAGHOBHA HAD NO IDEA THAT HE HAD
PUT HIS SEAL ON A DEATH WARRANT.



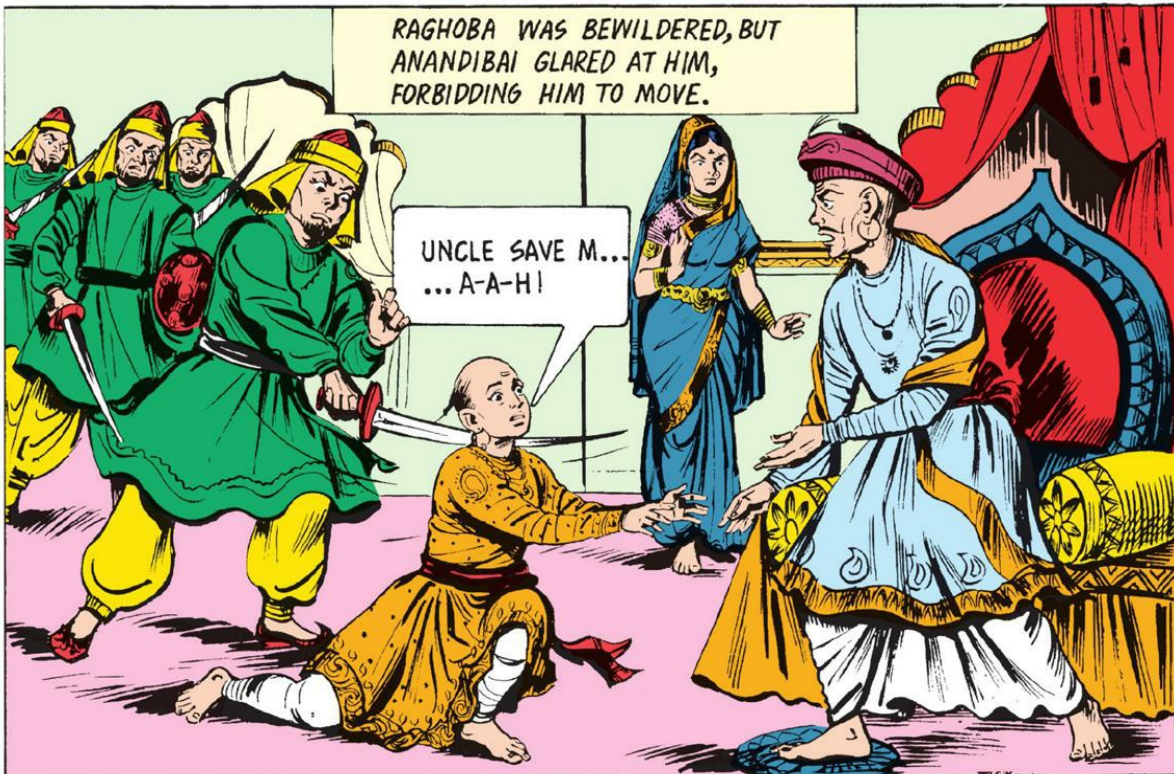
HE AND HIS MEN CHARGED INTO
NARAYAN RAO'S ROOM—



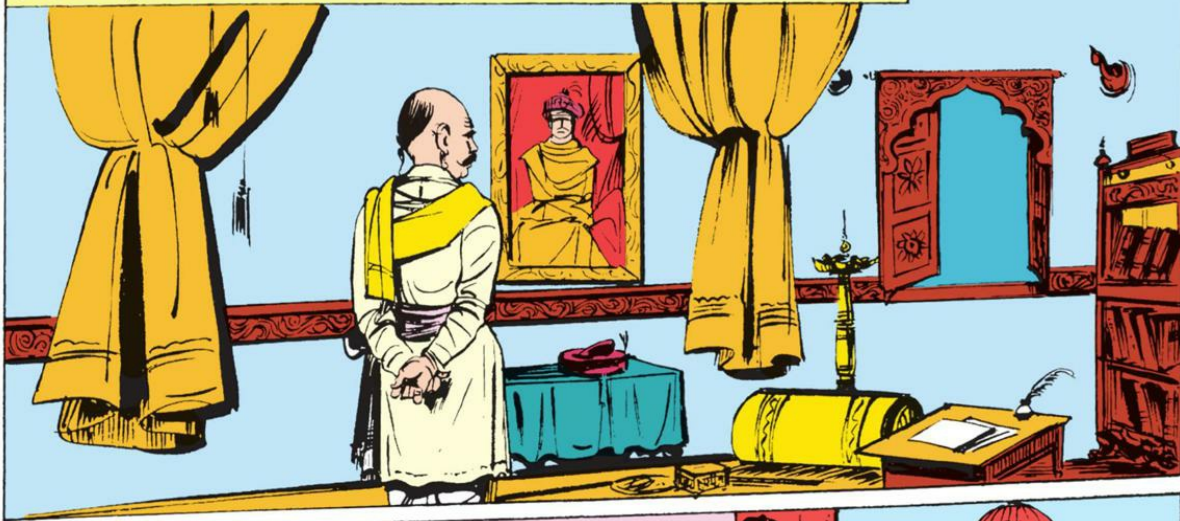
NARAYAN RAN TO RAGHOBA.



RAGHOBA WAS BEWILDERED, BUT
ANANDIBAI GLARED AT HIM,
FORBIDDING HIM TO MOVE.

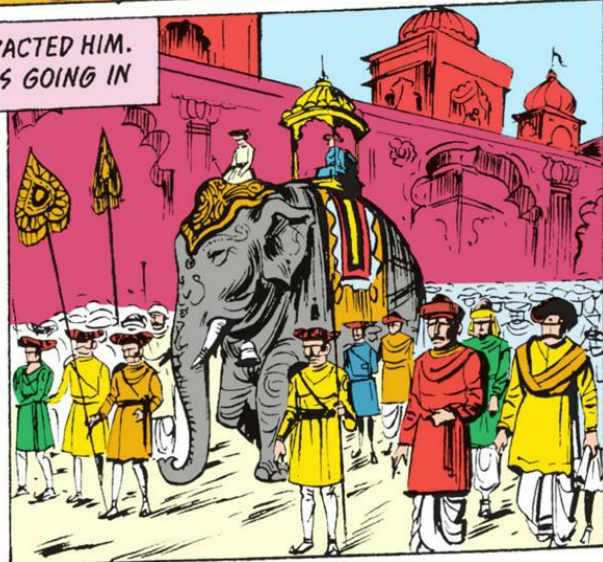


WHEN RAM SHASTRI LEARNT OF THE MURDER OF NARAYAN RAO IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, HE WAS AGHAST. HE PACED UP AND DOWN HIS ROOM.



SUDDENLY A COMMOTION ON THE STREET DISTRACTED HIM. HE LOOKED OUT OF THE WINDOW. RAGHOBHA WAS GOING IN PROCESSION TO THE DURBAR.

WHAT'S THAT?



UTTERLY DISGUSTED BY THE SIGHT, HE TURNED ROUND...

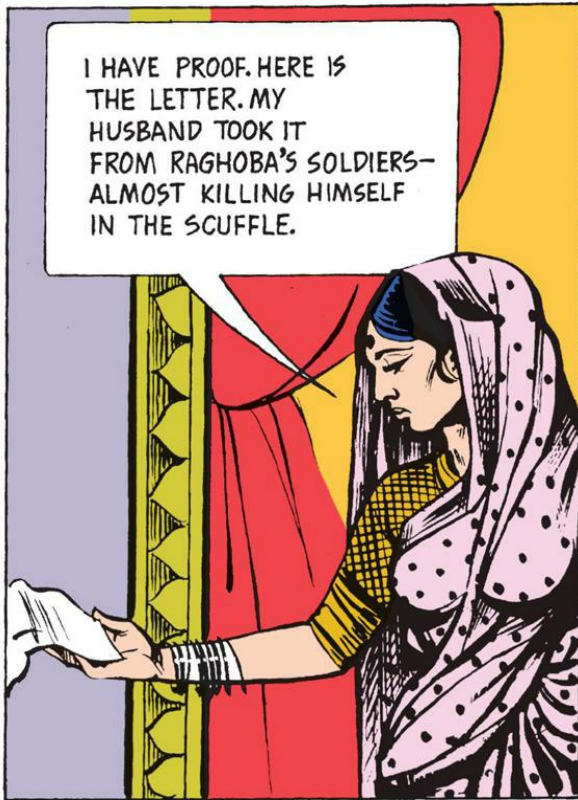


...TO FIND THE WIFE OF THE PESHWA'S BODYGUARD WAITING PATIENTLY FOR HIS ATTENTION.

YOU HERE?
WHAT DO
YOU WANT?

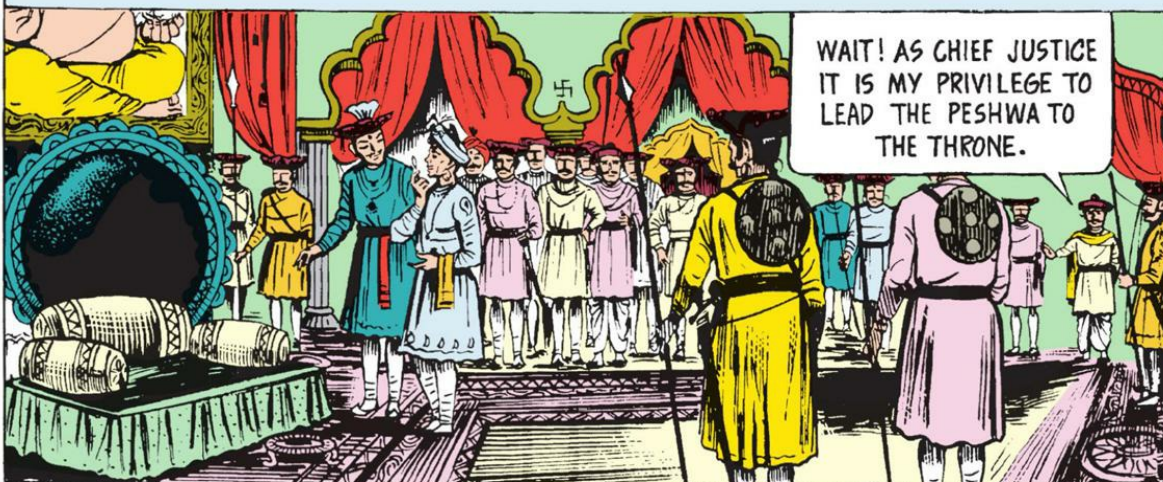
JUSTICE!



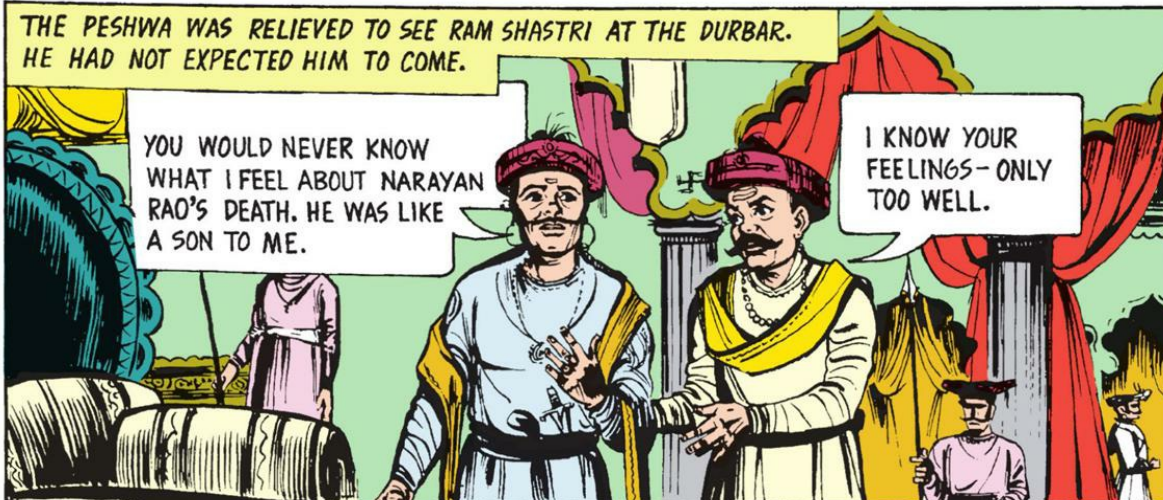




AT THE DURBAR HALL, RAGHUNATH RAO WAS ABOUT TO BE LED TO THE THRONE WHEN—



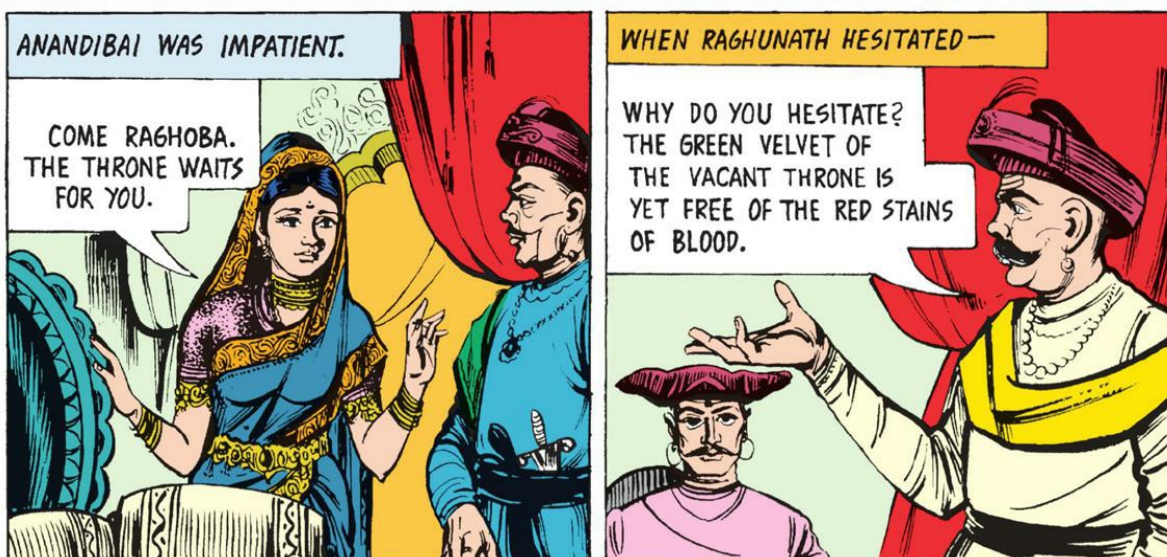
THE PESHWA WAS RELIEVED TO SEE RAM SHASTRI AT THE DURBAR. HE HAD NOT EXPECTED HIM TO COME.





YOUR WORDS SOOTHE ME.
I WANT YOU TO CONTINUE
AS CHIEF JUSTICE IN MY REIGN.
THE PESHWA'S SWORD WILL ALWAYS
STAND BY YOU IN THE CAUSE
OF JUSTICE.

SO ALSO,
IN THE CAUSE OF
JUSTICE I SHALL
DEPRIVE YOU OF THE
SWORD, IF NEED BE.

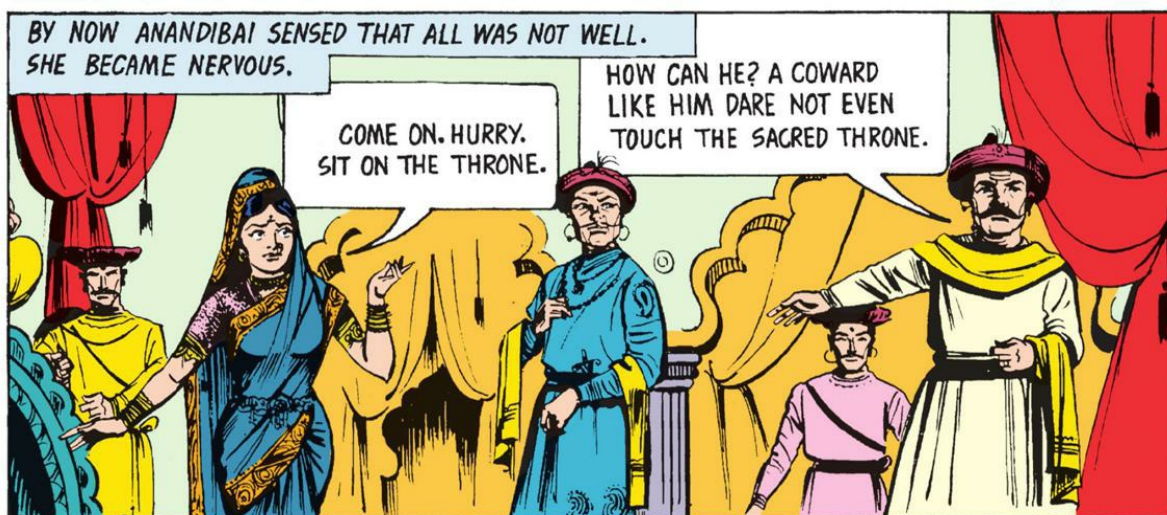


ANANDIBAI WAS IMPATIENT.

COME RAGHOBHA.
THE THRONE WAITS
FOR YOU.

WHEN RAGHUNATH HESITATED—

WHY DO YOU HESITATE?
THE GREEN VELVET OF
THE VACANT THRONE IS
YET FREE OF THE RED STAINS
OF BLOOD.



BY NOW ANANDIBAI SENSED THAT ALL WAS NOT WELL.
SHE BECAME NERVOUS.

COME ON. HURRY.
SIT ON THE THRONE.

HOW CAN HE? A COWARD
LIKE HIM DARE NOT EVEN
TOUCH THE SACRED THRONE.

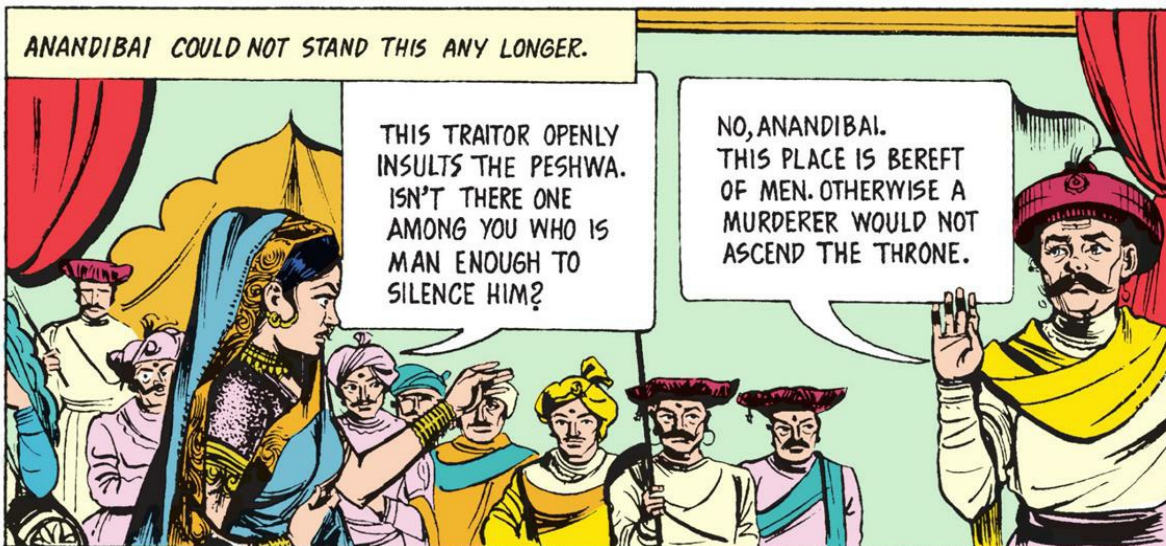
THE COURTIER'S WERE AGHAST.



RAM SHASTRI, BEWARE!
YOU ARE GOING TOO FAR.

HE IS A COWARD!
HE HAS HAD HIS OWN
NEPHEW MURDERED
TO USURP THE THRONE!

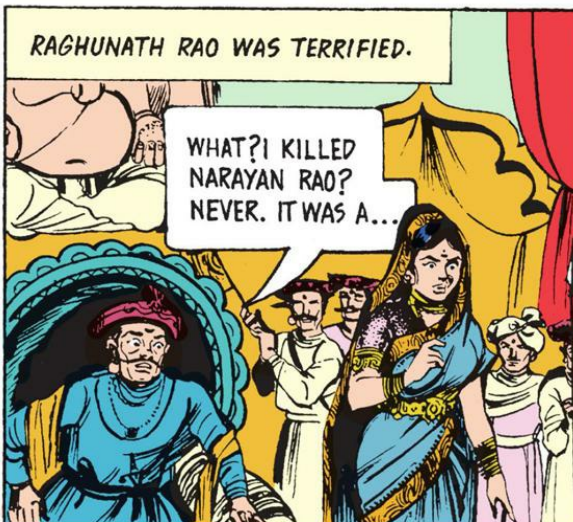
ANANDIBAI COULD NOT STAND THIS ANY LONGER.



THIS TRAITOR OPENLY
INSULTS THE PESHWA.
ISN'T THERE ONE
AMONG YOU WHO IS
MAN ENOUGH TO
SILENCE HIM?

NO, ANANDIBAI.
THIS PLACE IS BEREFT
OF MEN. OTHERWISE A
MURDERER WOULD NOT
ASCEND THE THRONE.

RAGHUNATH RAO WAS TERRIFIED.



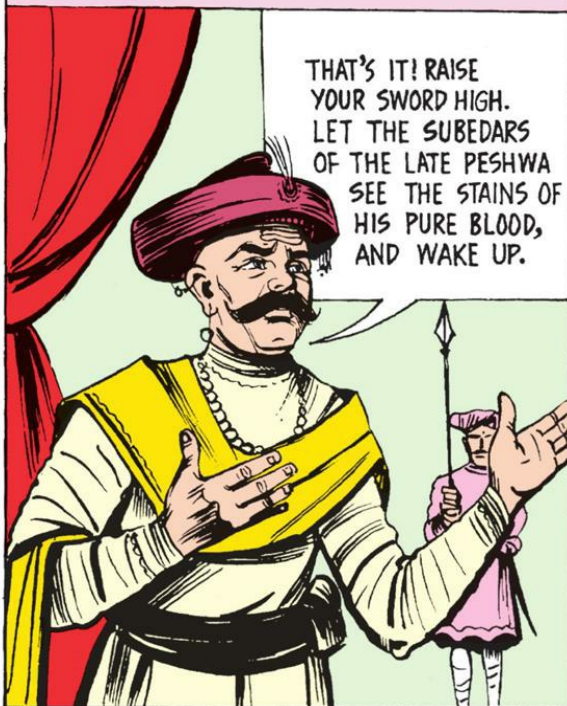
WHAT? I KILLED
NARAYAN RAO?
NEVER. IT WAS A...

JUST THEN RAGHOB'S SOLDIER RUSHED
TOWARDS RAM SHASTRI.



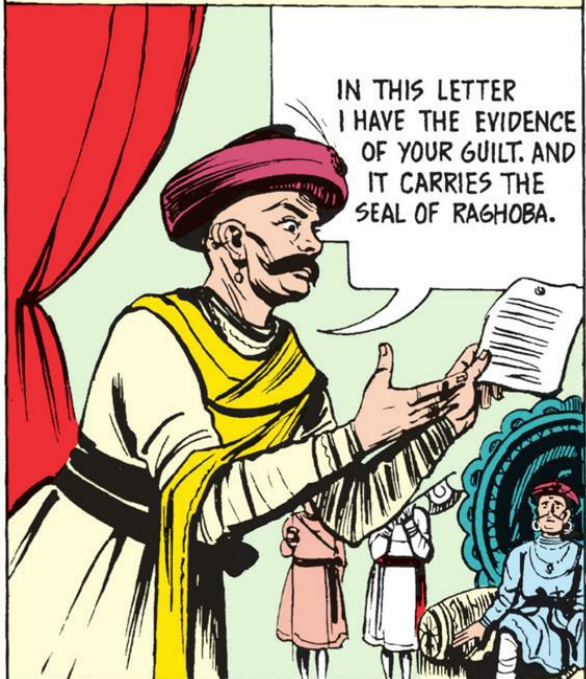
I SHALL SILENCE
YOU FOREVER,
BRAHMAN!

UNDAUNTED RAM SHASTRI STEPPED FORWARD.



THAT'S IT! RAISE
YOUR SWORD HIGH.
LET THE SUBEDARS
OF THE LATE PESHWA
SEE THE STAINS OF
HIS PURE BLOOD,
AND WAKE UP.

RAM SHASTRI PULLED OUT THE LETTER
FROM HIS CUMMERBUND.



IN THIS LETTER
I HAVE THE EVIDENCE
OF YOUR GUILT. AND
IT CARRIES THE
SEAL OF RAGHOBHA.

ANANDIBAI TURNED PALE WHEN SHE SAW
THE LETTER. SHE TURNED TO THE SOLDIERS.

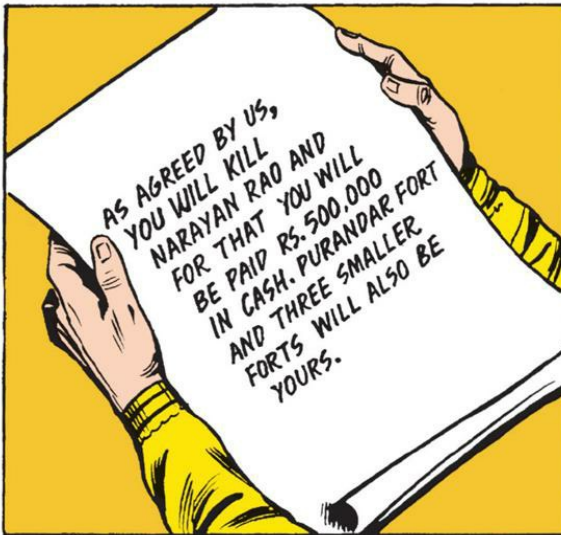


WHAT ARE YOU
WAITING FOR?
PUT HIM IN CHAINS.

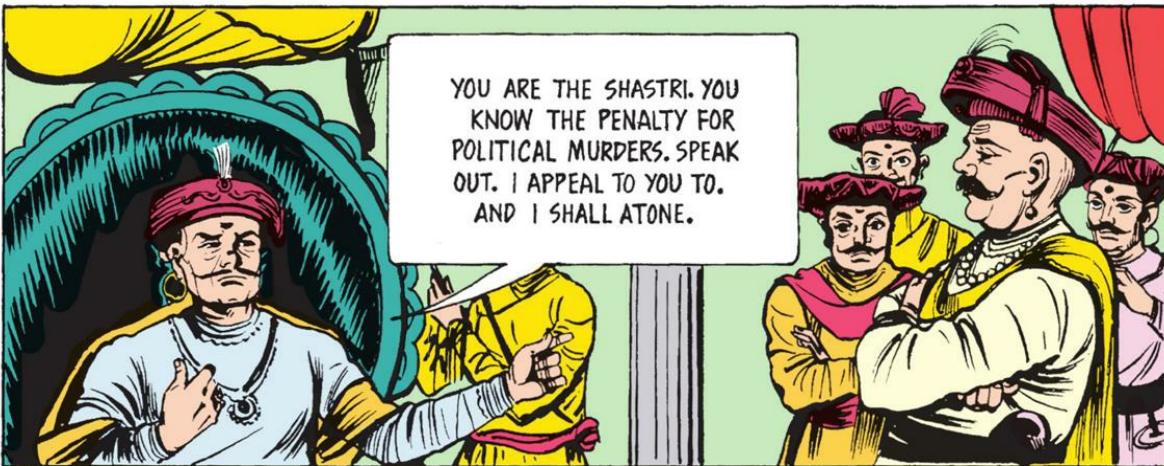
AS THEY RUSHED FORWARD, TWO SUBEDARS
INTERVENED.



BEWARE SOLDIERS!
OUR SWORDS ARE
DRAWN IN THE
SERVICE OF JUSTICE.
SHASTRI BUA! WHAT DOES
THE LETTER SAY?

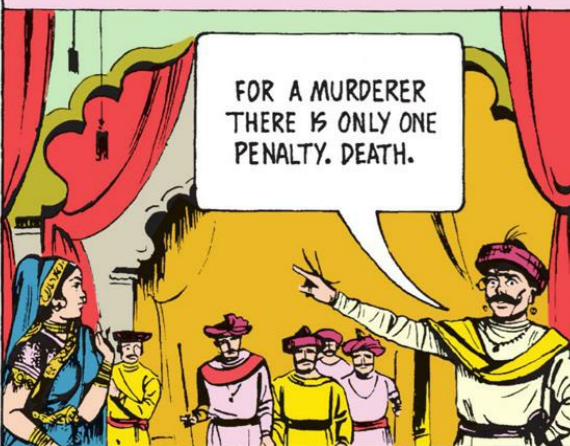


FOR A MOMENT RAGHOBHA WAS TONGUE-TIED. THEN-



THE COURTIER'S WERE IMPRESSED BY THE PESHWA'S WORDS, BUT NOT RAM SHASTRI.

FOR HIM THERE WAS NO COMPROMISE WHERE JUSTICE WAS CONCERNED.



BUT—



AHA! ONE STEP MORE
AND YOU WILL
BE DEAD!



SUBEDARS, IT IS FUTILE. AS
LONG AS THIS SINNER AND
MURDERER SITS ON THE THRONE
RAM SHASTRI SHALL BE AN ALIEN
IN POONA.



RAM SHASTRI, YOU HAVE
BEEN TRULY LOYAL TO
THE LATE PESHWA. THE
FIRST SALUTE OF THE DAY
SHALL BE TO YOU.

I AM HONOURED.
I SHALL RETURN, BUT ONLY
WHEN THE THRONE SHAKES
OFF THE MURDERER!

TRUE TO HIS WORD RAM SHASTRI LEFT POONA, AND RETURNED ONLY
WHEN THE POSTHUMOUS SON OF NARAYAN RAD - SAWAI
MADHAV RAD - WAS BORN AND WAS MADE THE PESHWA. FROM THEN
ONWARDS HE WAS THE CHIEF JUSTICE TILL THE END OF HIS DAYS.

WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

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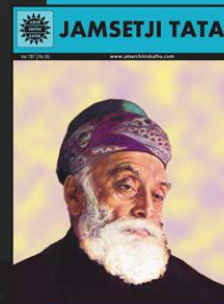
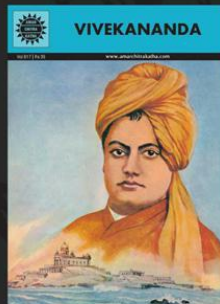
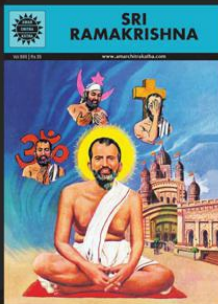


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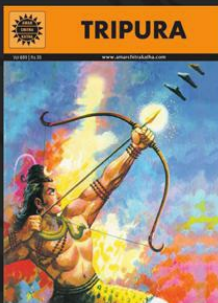
RAM SHASTRI

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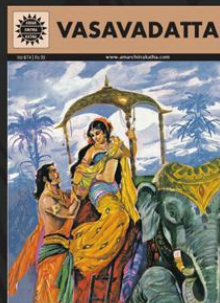
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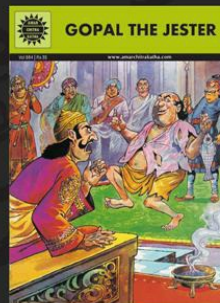
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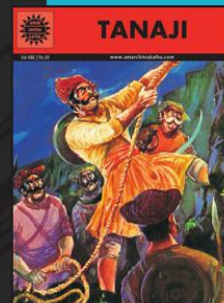
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